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JEWISH NEWS

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Full circle: Janice Lieberman's 20 years at Hebrew Day School

By Orit Aviran

Janice Lieberman makes her way up the 13 floors of Mott Children's Hospital, accompanied by her once boss and now friend Dina Shtull. Both are equipped with hiking backpacks, athletic gear, and unwavering determination.

When I ask Janice how much weight she was carrying on her back, she answers with a half-apology: "Only 23 pounds. I need to get to 35. I'm not there yet, but I'm on my way."

These preparations aren't for a post-graduation trip, a honeymoon, or a midlife adventure. Janice is planning her grand retirement trip — celebrating 20 years dedicated to Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor as librarian and classroom teacher.

Carrying "only 23 pounds" up 13 floors seems like an impressive achievement by any measure, but for Janice, a self-described "all-in" person, this is just a waypoint.

In this story, Michigan itself might have been just a waypoint. It wasn't a given that the Liebermans would plant roots here. Originally from the Maryland-DC area, Janice and Andy met through BBYO activities in their region. Life took them on adventures following Andy's work, and two options that could not have been more different were on the table — Texas or Michigan.

"The people at Baylor Medical Center really wanted my husband to come," Janice recalls. "We were there in mid-December on a gorgeous blue-sky, crisp cool morning of 40 degrees, and the school that we probably would have sent our kids to had indoor recess because it was too cold."

That was enough for this northern family. Fortunately for us, the Liebermans chose to settle in Ann Arbor.

My neighbor, the librarian

Despite the move, Hebrew Day School was not immediately on their radar.

"I have always said the job kind of fell out of the sky and landed in my lap," Janice recalls with a smile. She was home with their kids for a while, and their neighbor across the street, Corry Buckwalter, had three children — the oldest two attending Hebrew Day School. Corry's daughter, who was in fourth grade at the time, loved to read.

"My son was in the same grade and loved listening to me read to him, but he didn't like to read himself. So I had a house full of children's literature that my son wasn't really making use of, and I would give books to Corry's daughter, Hannah."

Like many other school resources at the time, the library program was largely formed and run by parent volunteers.

Continues on pg.5

The Firefly: Live Stories of Camp Tavor

By Randy Lubratich

Camp stories don't fade, they glow.

They linger in our hearts, lighting the way during hard moments and reminding us of who we are and where we come from.

Habonim Dror Camp Tavor (www.camptavor.org) invites the Washtenaw County community to The Firefly: Stories About Camp Tavor, Told Live: an upcoming program featuring true, personal stories from the people whose lives have been shaped by Tavor.

Hosted at the Love Building (4731 Grand River Avenue, Detroit), on Saturday, March 7, at 7 p.m., The Firefly will bring together a small group of storytellers to share moments of growth, challenge, connection, mischief,

Mira Sussman at Camp Tavor, 1978

and transformation rooted in their experiences at Camp Tavor in Three Rivers, Michigan. Tavor board member and Moth StorySLAM winner Etta King-Heisler will host the event as master of ceremonies.

For 70 years as of this summer, Tavor has been a place where Jewish values are lived — not just taught — through communal living, shared responsibility, and youth leadership. These experiences help young people entering second through 12th grade build confidence, resilience, and a lasting sense of belonging. The Firefly shines a light on how those values show up during the summer and long after it ends. "My time at Camp Tavor made me the Jew and the person that I am today," said Tavor Board Chair Mira Sussman. "I was one of those kids who lived 10 months of the year for the two months I got to be at camp, and I know that so many others can relate, and have their own stories of how camp made them the person that they are today."

While the stories center on Camp Tavor, the event is open to the public. "Whether you went to camp or not, everyone can relate to the feelings of being part of a community, making mistakes, learning to trust yourself — that's what these stories are about," says Heisler. Through The Firefly, attendees can share in the joy of Jewish community and get a behind-the-scenes view of how summers at Camp Tavor turn campers into counselors and counselors into leaders. At its heart, The Firefly celebrates the power of an immersive Jewish community that shapes identity, strengthens values, and influences the paths we take into adulthood.

Come listen. Come remember. Come be moved.

Join us, and help keep the glow alive, one story at a time.

Tickets available now: https://tinyurl.com/TavorFirefly ■

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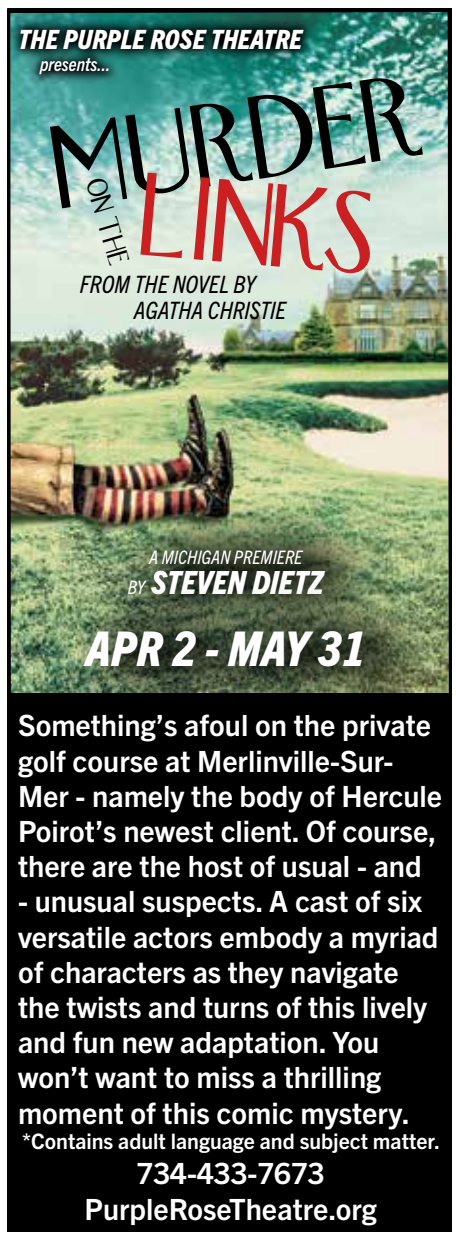

Something's afoul on the private golf course at Merlinville-Sur-Mer - namely the body of Hercule Poirot's newest client. Of course, there are the host of usual - and - unusual suspects. A cast of six versatile actors embody a myriad of characters as they navigate the twists and turns of this lively and fun new adaptation. You won't want to miss a thrilling moment of this comic mystery.

*Contains adult language and subject matter.

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PurpleRoseTheatre.org

From the editor

Immigrants, then and now.

I had a trying conversation this week with an old friend. She, born in Warsaw in 1942, is horrified and bewildered—worried about immigrants and even her own naturalized citizenship. There has always been inequity, but the scale and violence of current government policy is new and unfathomable, she told me. I deeply respect her opinion, but I'm currently reading three books about the United States policy and violence used to destroy Native American life and establish the US empire. So, I'm not sure what is new and what is the same, but parsing it out feels important to me.

I was delighted this month by two submissions from the past: Jewish immigrant experiences in Michigan, see page 23. I did a bit of rare for me reporting in an article on ICE activity in Washtenaw, see page 8. Do you have any thoughts about immigration, then and now? Why not share them here with the community?

At 28 pages, this issue of WJN is a little longer than recent issues. Perhaps it's the anticipated energy of spring, the season of our liberation. ■

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Phone numbers, websites, and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-445-1910, aarecon.org

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisrael-aa.org

Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com

Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies (EMU): www.emich.edu/jewish-studies/

Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., lsa.umich.edu/judaic/

Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org

Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org

Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org

Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org

UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org

Celebrated performer and scholar Alicia Jo Rabins headlines JCLP communal conversation

By Sam Tick-Raker

Alicia Jo Rabins

The students of the Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) at the University of Michigan will be hosting writer, musician, performer, and feminist Torah teacher Alicia Jo Rabins on Sunday, April 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. at The Common Cup (1511 Washtenaw Avenue) in Ann Arbor. The evening will be filled with music, singing, and learning, as Alicia presents Girls in Trouble, her interactive indie-folk song cycle that brings Biblical women to life through song and storytelling. A short discussion with Alicia will follow her performance. Free coffee/espresso drinks will be available before and after the concert! There are a limited number of seats available, so please RSVP at https://myumi.ch/E8RQ2 to register today!

Alicia Jo Rabins is the author of two poetry books, Divinity School (APR/Honickman First Book Prize) and Fruit Geode (a finalist for the Jewish Book Award). A performer and composer who also works in theater and film, Rabins tours internationally with Girls in Trouble and is the co-writer and star of the indie feature film, A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff. Her most recent book is a spiritual memoir, When We're Born We Forget Everything, published by Schocken Books in 2026, and will be available for purchase at the event on April 12. Visit her at www.aliciajo.com.

Every year, graduating JCLP students plan a public program meant to engage and challenge the University and Ann Arbor communities around issues or experiences related to American Jewish life. With the visit of Alicia Jo Rabins, the JCLP students hope to encourage their communities to think more deeply about the roles of women in ancient and contemporary Jewish life and to provide a space for Jewish joy and community.

JCLP is a unique program offering a dynamic education for emerging leaders who are passionate about supporting Jewish communities as they navigate the evolving challenges of 21st-century Jewish and North American life. Based in the University of Michigan (U-M) School of Social Work, JCLP provides students with rigorous academic and hands-on professional training in social work as Masters of Social Work and a demanding certificate in Jewish Communal Leadership in coordination with U-M's Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. JCLP students value the strong support they have received from Ann Arbor's Jewish community and hope to pay some of that back by sharing programs like the concert with Alicia Jo Rabins. This event is a fully student-planned program, organized and facilitated by the second-year JCLP students as they seek to offer the local Jewish community this space for meaningful joyful engagement and a unique experience. ■

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Jewish and Hebrew story times at AADL: All are welcome!

By Amichay Findling, Israel and Overseas manager, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

"Holy Rabbi,"
he cried, "you have
made life sweet
for me. With just
my family in the
hut, it's so quiet, so
roomy, so peaceful
… What a plea-
sure!"

(Excerpt *from It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folktale*, by Margot Zemach)

At a time when there is rising concern about antisemitism, and some Jews are hesitant to wear Jewish symbols in public, local ShinShinim and the Ann Arbor District Library (AADL) partner to openly celebrate Jewish and Hebrew culture on a regular, monthly basis.

The Jewish and Hebrew Storytime program is a flagship project of the Ann Arbor ShinShinim, under the supervision of Amichay Findling, the Jewish Federation's Israel and Overseas Manager. ShinShinim (acronym for "Shnat Sherut," Hebrew for "year of service") are a pair of Israeli high school graduates who volunteer in the local Jewish community before their military service and/or university studies.

The story time program began with small gatherings of parents and their children rotating between AADL branches. Now, it has found a home at the Downtown library, with increasing attendance and interest. One Sunday a month, the ShinShinim read Jewish books in Hebrew and English and engage participants in related crafts activities. They bring the joy of Jewish and Israeli culture and customs out into the community.

For young Israeli families in our community, the Hebrew story time often fills an important gap in Hebrew language culture and education for their kids. Tomer, an Israeli parent to two trilingual children, says, "Hebrew story time shows kids that Hebrew isn't only something they encounter in class — it's something they can belong in. It's a living cultural space of stories, humor, and traditions, and holding it in the public library signals that Hebrew is part of the fabric of our broader community."

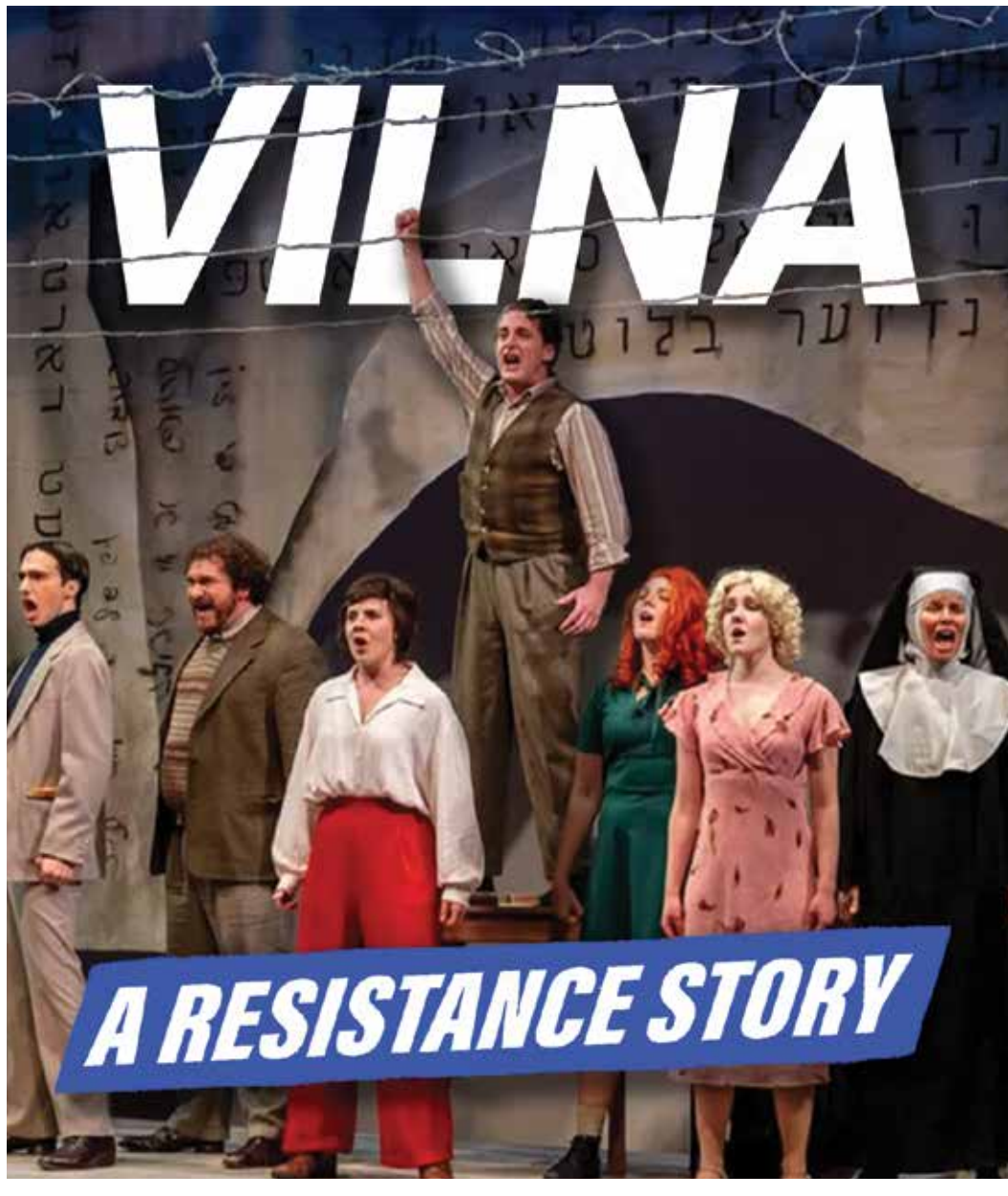
The monthly story time, part of the "AADL Welcomes" program, is free and open to the public with no registration required. Dozens of families have participated and enjoyed stories like the Yiddish Folktale "It Could Always Be Worse," "Pumpkin Pie for Sigd" about an Ethiopian Jewish holiday, and the classic tale "The Selfish Crocodile" in Hebrew. Activities have included crafting menorahs out of recycled materials, building bridges out of spaghetti and marshmallows, and "ice cream in a bag" for Shavuot.

Ariel, a regular parent participant in the English language program, comments, "Our kids love the program and ask if the Shinshinim will be at the library every time we go! This has been a nice opportunity for them to celebrate their Jewish identities outside of the designated Jewish spaces in the community."

Upcoming story times take place March 22, April 26, May 17, and June 7 at the AADL Downtown library, 343 S 5th Ave, Ann Arbor, 3rd floor community room. English language program begins at 10:30 a.m.; the Hebrew story time and activity commences at 11:30 a.m.

In addition to their work at the AADL, Ann Arbor's ShinShinim engage with children and teenagers in variety of community institutions. They are hosted by generous local families, who open their houses and their hearts to them.

For more details about engaging with the ShinShinim or hosting next year's cohort, contact Amichay Findling (amichay@jewishannarbor.org) ■



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Sunday, March 22 at 2:30 PM

Vilna: A Resistance Story is a new musical about Vitka Kempner, a fearless 19-year-old who helped spark the Jewish resistance in the Vilna ghetto during the Holocaust, culminating in her historic sabotage of a Nazi train.

With a vibrant klezmer-influenced pop score, *Vilna* tells a powerful, often-forgotten story of courage and resistance that resonates today.

This dynamic performance will be followed by a Q&A and dessert reception.

This event is a thank you to our members.

To become a member and RSVP, please call 248-536-9600 by March 18.

THE Zekelman HOLOCAUST CENTER

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holocaustcenter.org

HDS continued from pg 1

Joan Hartman, an amazing alumni parent, had basically built the library program and found volunteers to staff library classes. But her son was graduating, and there was a committee trying to figure out what to do next.

"Corry recommended that I interview for the job. Dina accepted me to work — and that was it. One thing led to the next, and this position, besides being my job, opened the door for tons of connections to people in the Jewish community and to very, very wonderful friendships."

At Hebrew Day School, Janice wore several hats in addition to her role as librarian, one of them being math enrichment teacher. "At the time we had several children who were doing very well in math. I remember Leo, Aaron Fried's son, and two other children really enjoying this opportunity." With time this became a formal math enrichment program. "Aaron is now volunteering teaching the Math Olympiad project with me," she notes.

In 2014, Hebrew Day School decided to shift to a multi-age classroom model. Janice saw this as an opportunity to return to her original role as classroom teacher, and describes those years as instrumental to her personal connections with the students. Around this time she and Andy had decided to pick up a new hobby: backpacking.

"We started backpacking only a year before I started in the classroom again," Janice explains. One curricular goal for Janice's students was to write personal narratives, or true stories from their lives. She decided to use her hiking experiences to teach students how to write these narratives, modeling each step of the process starting with brainstorming possible topics and picking the right one. "I got to a point where we would be on our summer backpacking trips, and I would come back to class and model this as my personal narrative."

Her passion for backpacking wove itself into the classroom even when it had nothing to do with the curriculum. She shares a favorite memory: "I always hated taking days off from school, but there's this hike that's just incredible, right along the Arizona-Utah border. It's called The Wave. It's really amazing, and you have to sign up for a lottery because so many people want to do it."

She and Andy were mentally prepared that they probably wouldn't get picked. "I remember the kids were getting ready for outdoor recess, and I was like, 'Oh, it's 11 o'clock, let me check my email' — and the email said we got it! I started jumping up and down like a little girl."

The students — our current fifth graders — surrounded her, asking what happened. "I ended up showing them all these pictures, sending an email to the parents, and teaching them about the geology of the place."

This wasn't unusual. HaMorah Janice is known for pouring her heart into her classroom (or library), and apparently, just like backpacking, once she set her mind to something, there was no way it wasn't going to happen.

"I was one of those little kids that always wanted to be a teacher. We had a chalkboard down in the basement, and I would teach lessons. My friends would come over and we would take turns, but I always wanted it more than they did."

Janice shares that in earlier days, women didn't have as many career choices as they have today. Smart women were expected to follow a specific route. "Most women who wanted intellectual pursuits really had just a few options open to them, and I happened to be somebody that could have had other options. But teaching was what I wanted to do all along." She pauses, then continues with emphasis: "I felt plenty of people saw teaching as a last resort because it was such a low-paying profession. They could go into professions that were much more lucrative. But teaching was my passion, and I wanted to show that smart people can be and should be teachers too."

Part of something bigger

When asked about the impact of her dedicated school work, Janice humbly deflects. She sees her role as part of something larger, as a piece of a bigger picture. "What I have felt very strongly over many years is how important it is to the alumni, parents, and community that Hebrew Day School be a strong school and a piece of a thriving Jewish community in Ann Arbor. I think that's really evident."

One of the proudest yet most complex moments Janice recalls is the community's support for Sam and Jason Schwalb after they tragically lost their daughter Anna, z"l, in 2014. "Everybody just wanted to wrap their arms around them and help out with the fundraising for the library," she says, referring to what is now the Anna Schwalb Memorial Library at Hebrew Day School. "I think there's just a lot of pride and a desire to protect the strength of Hebrew Day School as part of a proud, steadfast Jewish community overall."

To my last question — 'What's on the librarian's reading list?' — Janice laughs. Apparently, times are changing for her as well. "My reading habits have changed. I used to be a voracious reader of books, and then for a while when I was in the classroom, I was so busy reading young children's books that I really wasn't taking the time to read adult literature."

When she returned to the library, she thought, "'Oh, I gotta catch up!'" Now, instead of sitting reading in bed and dealing with reading glasses, she's gotten into the habit of listening to audiobooks. "I use Libby, the free library app, and I listen to audiobooks all the time."

Recently, she discovered a book about a 1938 expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers and through the Grand Canyon — the first to include women rafters.

Following in their footsteps

This sense of adventure and discovery, whether through books or historical expeditions, perfectly mirrors Janice's own journey at the school. A full circle closes as Janice reveals that the two women were botanists from the University of Michigan, and in a few months, she and Andy will be following in their footsteps.

"I wasn't looking for a job. I wasn't trying," she concludes. "And yet, the job happened. I'm thankful to Corry for suggesting me. I'm thankful to Dina for hiring me. It became such a significant part of my life."

She pauses, reflecting on what Hebrew Day School has meant to her personally. "HDS was so much more to me. There is so much ruach here — the Rosh Chodesh assemblies, the songs, so much joy and fun. Hebrew Day School has provided me with an opportunity to have a Jewish experience here in Ann Arbor that was really positive. Yes, I would occasionally go to services and similar activities someplace else, but it was truly at Hebrew Day School that I allowed myself to have much of my personal Jewish identity formed and expressed — and for that I am forever grateful."

Hebrew Day School celebrates Janice Lieberman's 20 years of dedication to Jewish education and wishes her meaningful adventures ahead. Those wishing to honor Janice's legacy may contribute to the Anna Schwalb Memorial Library in her name. For donations and more information about Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, visit hdsaa.org or contact oaviran@hdsaa.org. ■

Jewish comic at benefit for PJ Library

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

Join the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor for the fourth Annual Night of Comedy and FUNdraising, benefitting PJ Library, at the Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase on Thursday, March 12. Doors will open at 6 p.m., and the show will begin at 7:15 p.m.

This year's headliner is nationally recognized Jewish comedian Shaun Eli Breidbart, who has rightfully been called one of America's smartest comics, has headlined shows on six continents, and tours with Armed Forces Entertainment. His jokes and topical material have been quoted everywhere from the New York Post to the Reform Judaism magazine, and they have even been used by former Tonight Show host Jay Leno. Shaun's business, The Ivy League of Comedy, is the premier group of stand-up comedians touring America, and their performance at the Emelin Theatre can be found on Amazon. In addition, Shaun has been featured in Seasons 1 & 2 of Netflix's QuickLaffs.

All proceeds from this year's event will help support PJ Library Ann Arbor. PJ Library sends free award-winning books that celebrate Jewish values and culture to families with children from birth through 12 years old. With your support, the JCC will be able to continue providing thousands of free books a year to the greater Ann Arbor area.

Become a sponsor today and reserve your seat for a night of Comedy and FUNdraising by visiting jccannarbor.org. Sponsorship opportunities start at $200, and all sponsorship levels include recognition on our platforms, priority seating, drink tickets, and refreshments. Individual tickets are $48 and include 2 drink tickets (21 and up), unlimited popcorn, and a kosher snack of your choice. This year's event will also include a raffle with great prizes you won't want to miss!

If you call Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase directly at (734) 996-9080 to purchase your tickets, you will not incur a processing fee. With questions, please contact Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate at drewcoel@jccannarbor.org.

We hope to see you for Comedy Night on March 12! ■

Public schools affinity group for Jewish families

By Esther J. Terry

The Jewish Community Relations Committee (JCRC) is excited to launch Jewish Families in Public Schools (JFPS), an affinity group focused on serving families with Jewish students in public schools throughout Washtenaw County. JCRC director Rabbi Asher Lopatin will lead this group in partnership with a trio of public-school advocacy veterans: Wendy Lawrence, Jennifer Van Beck, and Esther Terry.

Jewish Families in Public Schools' mission encompasses the inclusion of all Jewish families, collaboration between families and public schools, and a shared commitment to strong public education. To this end, JFPS will facilitate communication between families and educators, school administrators, and district leadership by providing educational resources, advocating for diverse representations of Jewish cultural heritage, and serving as a response point for incidents of antisemitism.

An initial JFPS goal is to streamline feedback from families to educators and district leadership. Historically informal and decentralized, this process has led to confusion among families who are requesting resources or trying to report an antisemitic incident at their student's school.

JFPS also will look at ways to expand the recognition of Jewish American Heritage Month. In May 2025, Rabbi Lopatin and a group of parent volunteers collaborated to develop the first successful recognition of Jewish American Heritage Month by the Ann Arbor Public School board and district leadership. Planning efforts are already under way for events and educational opportunities coming up in May 2026.

JFPS welcomes participation and feedback from all families with Jewish children enrolled in Washtenaw County public schools and, to better serve families countywide, they are recruiting parents or caregivers to volunteer as points of contact for their school or district. The group leadership team can be reached at: publicschoolfamilies@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Super Sunday success

By Becky Melamed

The Jewish Federation's Super Sunday fundraiser was a record-breaking success, raising more than $77,000 in a single morning and surpassing last year's total of $54,000. As the Federation's largest annual community-wide phone-a-thon, Super Sunday brought together 35 dedicated volunteers in a room buzzing with energy, phones in hand and a shared commitment to strengthening Jewish life locally and around the world.

Funds raised through Super Sunday support the 2026 Annual Community Campaign, which provides critical resources to keep the Jewish community safe, strong, and welcoming. Campaign dollars ensure that local organizations such as the JCC, Jewish Family Services (JFS), and Hillel at the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University can continue delivering essential programs and services. The campaign also enables the Jewish Federation to address urgent communal priorities, including security, combating antisemitism, supporting Israel and global Jewish communities in crisis, and planning for the future.

This year, the Jewish Federation set an audacious campaign goal of $2 million. This is an increase of 25%, reflecting the growing and evolving needs of our community:

$1.7 million to meet the demonstrated needs of our communal organizations including JFS, the JCC, HDS, Chabad, Hand in Hand Schools in Israel, and many others — $100,000 more than we were able to fund last year.

$275,000 to meet rising community security costs, including our Community Security program and helping communal organizations pay for security guard services.

$25,000 to sustain the vibrant ShinShinim program in Ann Arbor following a wildly successful first year.

Student volunteers in action, making calls to support the 2026 Annual Community Campaign

This year's Super Sunday helped propel the 2026 campaign past $1.4 million raised from more than 450 generous donors, bringing the community closer to its bold $2 million goal. Throughout the morning, volunteers enjoyed time together, won prizes, shared breakfast, and, most importantly, personally thanked donors for their generosity. One volunteer shared, "What made Super Sunday so meaningful was seeing our community come together. Old friends, neighbors, and members of different Jewish organizations all driven by a shared commitment to the Ann Arbor Jewish community." Campaign Co-Chair Sierra Imwalle asked the volunteers, "What's your why? Why do you show up for Super Sunday, especially on a cold, snowy day when it would be so easy to sleep in and stay home?" Answers included:

"I show up for the Jewish community, just as my parents did before me, and now it's my turn to give back."

"I worry that if I don't show up, who will?"

"Knowing that we're helping ensure a vibrant Jewish future in Ann Arbor for generations ahead is why I show up."

While the funds raised are vital, the opportunity to connect with and express gratitude to the community made Super Sunday especially meaningful.

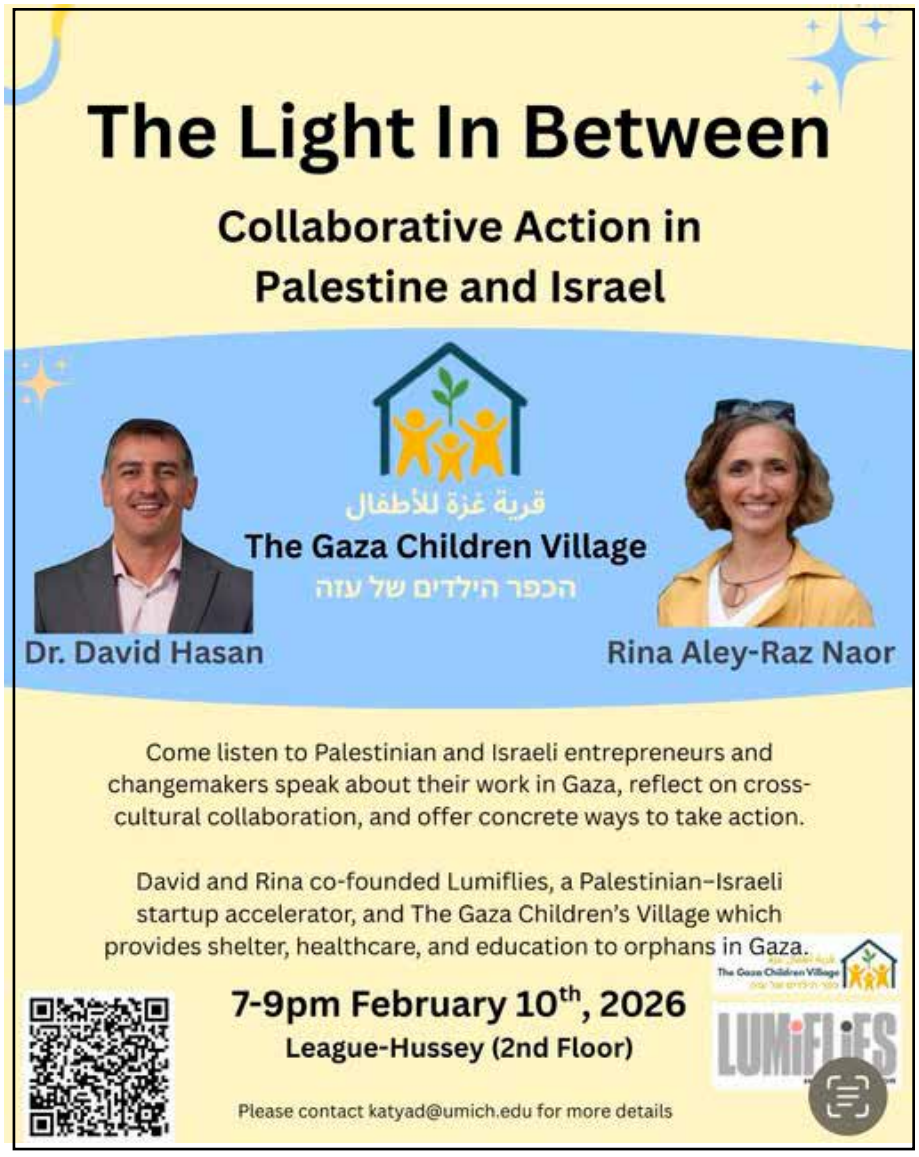
To learn more about the impact of the Jewish Federation's Annual Community Campaign or to donate, visit JewishAnnArbor.org/donate or contact Becky Melamed at becky@jewishannarbor.org.. ■

Community members coming together for the 2026 Annual Community Campaign

Feature

In Gaza: The light in between

By Ari Smith



In the aftermath of October 7, Rina Naor felt a million different emotions — fear, shock, and anxiety, but above all a sense of hopelessness. After the initial violence had subsided, Naor, an entrepreneur who worked with start-ups in the technological industry, felt unsure of what to do. When it seemed like the government was paralyzed, she saw how civil society, everyone from doctors to office workers to delivery drivers, came out into the streets to take matters into their own hands where they could. "If I ask, 'what can I do?'" Naor told her audience at the February 10 lecture, "The Light In Between: Collaborative Action in Palestine and Israel," "the answer is that I can do a lot."

Organized by a University of Michigan student, the lecture at the Michigan League brought an audience of college students and retirees, Muslims and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians, to learn about how average people have created something together to help the most vulnerable.

Naor began small, with a friend who owned a restaurant texting her that they'd taken kilos of chicken out of their freezer which would now go to waste — did she know anyone who could use it? The answer at the time was no, but she turned to her neighborhood WhatsApp group and suddenly her home was full of neighbors pounding and frying chicken schnitzel. After the cooking was done, she had nowhere to distribute it, so she once again contacted the group and a truck showed up to ferry the food away. Each time there was a question, someone had the answer.

Then, in May of 2024, Naor read an article in Haaretz about a Palestinian-American neurosurgeon named David Hasan who had volunteered to go into Gaza and give medical aid to civilians. Naor could not look away from the pain she saw there and began working with Hasan to create the Gaza Children Village (GCV), which launched in April of 2025. The first major initiative was the Academy of Hope, which opened in late July of that year, with the plan of offering 200 children a safe place to learn and play. That first day, 600 children showed up, many of whom had not eaten in days before arriving.

Today, there are five Academies of Hope operating in cities all over Gaza, serving 8,500 children daily, with a goal of opening another 10,000 student "mega academy" within weeks. Students receive at least one meal per day, with extra food available to be brought home to their extended and foster families. Children now have somewhere safe that they can keep coming back to, build routines with trusted adults, and receive an education that had been entirely disrupted for years by war.

"The young generation lost two years of education," says Naor in an interview after the event, "and it will take five, 10, 20 years to rebuild Gaza. We have to give them a way to have a future so they are not lost to despair." When explaining how they are offering their space to universities after the schoolchildren have departed for the afternoon, she adds that the university students "will have the ability to learn, just by using our infrastructure to bridge the gap. Hopefully by the time they finish learning, it will be a little easier for them to go out and build something better."

In her work with Gaza Children's Village, Naor continues with the strategies she has employed since day one — asking for help. "I'm a tech person, what do I know about humanitarian work," she jokes. Instead of attempting to reinvent the wheel on their own, GCV partners with other aid agencies such as World Central Kitchen, which runs the food distribution, and Challenge to Change, a women's empowerment organization which offers vocational training to the women attending GCV's Women's Centers of Hope, which run hand in hand with the academies. The staff on the ground are local, sourced through community connections like those Naor encountered in her neighborhood schnitzel making.

Naor speaks often about the need to connect with those around us and to maintain empathy, especially with those with whom you disagree. Both American and Israeli societies have become increasingly polarized in recent years, and many have given up on being able to talk to each other about anything important. When asked how she manages to open herself up to those whose views differ from her own, Naor laughs. "I fight with my father every day," she says. "It is easy to separate my work from that, though, because I focus on what matters most, which are the women and children we help. Their needs are above anything else."

"Every human being can relate to the need for safety, for a future, for the ability to feed their children," she continues. "I don't know how to live with our differences, but I know that we will have to live together. I can focus on the commonalities, and I believe that people genuinely want things to be good. I listen, and I don't argue, and I tell them about the kids and my work and watch their heart open up. It's a small win of our hearts getting closer."

Beyond empathy and connection, however, is the need to do something. Especially for those living thousands of miles from Gaza, the questions of "what can I do? How can I possibly have an impact on something so large? How can my five-dollar donation mean anything?" ring loudly in our ears. Naor pushed back against this. "Our dream came true because of five dollars from common people," she says. "We are thousands of people in this organization — every dollar that everyone gave made this dream happen. We never got huge grants from funds or governments, it was all from common people from $1 to $100,000, who believe in people and believe in the strength of people to make a difference. Every action you take helps your neighbor. There is polarization — find the person you don't agree with and find commonality to do something good for another person who needs help. You will feel what I'm feeling every day. You are enlightened by positivity, a bubble of hope in a dark time. Imagine if millions of people do that — how many bubbles of hope will make our life brighter? Every minute you do something good with anyone you disagree with has a huge impact."

To find out more and to donate to The Gaza Children Village projects, go to their website, thegazachildrenvillage.org. ■

Organizing in Washtenaw to support immigrants targeted by ICE

By Clare Kinberg

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is currently detaining one or two people a day in Washtenaw County, according to several activists in the immigrants' rights network. Some, like reports of four parents of Ypsilanti Community Schools students detained in January, receive wide news coverage. Most ICE activity in Washtenaw County is not reported to the public.

Washtenaw has several organizations and networks in place to monitor ICE activity and to aid targeted individuals and families. One of these, the newly formed Interfaith Fund for Immigrant Justice (IFIJ) kicked off their fundraising efforts on February 11. Their goal is to raise $100,000 for the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC).

The IFIJ kickoff filled the Genesis Social Hall drawing the participation of over 140 people from 23 congregations, including Beth Israel, Temple Beth Emeth, the Jewish Cultural Society, Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, and the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan. The first speaker, Silvia Nolasco-Rivers, spoke about what the immigrant community is experiencing now. She herself came from El Salvador as a child with her family. They lived in Sanctuary at the Friends Meeting churches in Portland, Oregon, and Ann Arbor.

Silia Nolasco-Rivers

Nolasco-Rivers spoke passionately about the effects of the local ICE actions that she is seeing as she visits families with her daughter Esperanza and distributes aid. She gave a poignant example of a local couple, where the man kissed his wife on the forehead before leaving the house for work and said, "We'll make chicharrones when I get home." She never saw him again.

She talked about breadwinners being taken, leaving the wife and children without support. She asked the gathered to imagine kissing their wives or husbands or children goodbye and having them suddenly gone at the end of the day. She said that while the money we are raising is important, it is essential to also give immigrants moral support, to let them know they are seen, to get to know them personally. With a largely white, middle-class group of people gathered to see "what we can do," she said that it was really about love. It was a very powerful message. After she spoke, the room was silent, with a palpable energy. Organizer Steve Merritt said, "It felt like we really knew then why we were there."

Although Michigan has not had widely reported conflicts in response to ICE activity, the state is home to one of the largest ICE detention facilities, the North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin. Many Washtenaw detainees are taken to Baldwin, which reopened as a detention center in June 2025. Baldwin, located in Lake County, is about a three-hour drive from Ann Arbor. Detainees at Baldwin are often held without due process, without access to lawyers, without communications with loved ones, and in reported crude and cruel conditions. As of early January, the facility in Baldwin housed a daily average of 1,391 detainees. Ann Arbor activists have made a concerted effort to support detainees through visitations, support for legal fees, and donations for commissary accounts. Local supporters have also helped to organize an ongoing "Washtenaw Witness at Baldwin" presence since this past Fall.

Every detention creates ripples of trauma across the community — not just for those most directly vulnerable, but also for their friends and colleagues and peers. Families and neighbors are traumatized, and the lack of transparency by ICE generates rumors that widen the fear. Allies and advocates are affected too.

In one case, reported Richard Stahler-Sholk, a young man was injured by ICE during his detention and taken to Trinity/St. Joseph Hospital, and a community observer was issued a trespass ban for acting as an observer. In another situation, a Latino advocate who was accompanying someone to a court appointment was seized by ICE, pushed to the ground, handcuffed and verbally abused, even though he explained that he was a U.S. citizen and was carrying identification to prove it.

According to school, public health, community agency staff, and members of the impacted communities, immigrants across Washtenaw are living in fear. Many are afraid of taking children to school or childcare, riding the bus, going to work, going to medical appointments, or showing up for court appointments even for traffic tickets.

In response, Washtenaw since 2017 has a revival of the "sanctuary movement," a network created in the 1980s to house and protect refugees fleeing violence in their home countries.

The new sanctuary movement of individuals and religious congregations is supporting immigrants in a multitude of ways. Congregations are posting signs excluding ICE from private spaces of their facilities, since Trump rescinded the "sensitive locations" limitation on ICE enforcement. Others are helping to raise funds for direct assistance to families and, especially, for legal support.

Activist groups are organizing "Know Your Rights" trainings for businesses as well as community members, as well as distributing whistles and setting up hotlines to mobilize observers when ICE sightings are reported. Since the murders of Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, numerous hyper-local neighborhood watch groups have spread to monitor ICE activity. These groups are organizing themselves at the block level, at the neighborhood level, at the Ward level, at the school-district level, and/or in other geographically specific areas.

There has been a proliferation of vigils, rallies, protests, and walkouts: some by students at U-M, Pioneer High School, and Community High; some by groups like Indivisible; and others by other faith-based coalitions.

The City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County have passed resolutions aimed at stopping abusive practices of Federal immigration enforcement in municipally owned facilities, buildings, parking areas, and programs. On Monday, February 2, more than 100 community members gathered in Larcom City Hall in Ann Arbor to reaffirm and expand the city's policy of non-cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The policy prohibits city officials and local police from assisting federal immigration enforcement officials in operations not backed up by a judicial warrant and initiates the drafting of an ordinance requiring all law enforcement to clearly display identification, restricts the use of city buildings or parking lots for immigration enforcement, and reinforces the prohibition of surveillance of a person or group based on their immigration status or race.

Councilmember Cynthia Harrison, D-Ward 1, encouraged the council to preemptively enact legal protections for undocumented residents in case of an immigration crackdown in the city.

"We do not want Ann Arbor to wait until harm becomes normalized or until fear becomes routine," Harrison said. "As a city governmnt, we have a responsibility to lead by example. That means using our authority carefully and lawfully, and refusing to facilitate actions that undermine constitutional protections."

There is a growing list of the local resources available for those affected by immigration enforcement:

MIRA: Movement for Immigrant Rights Action, https://sites.google.com/view/mira-washtenaw/, email mirawashtenaw@gmail.com. Hotline for texting to report ICE sightings, (734) 224-3852. MIRA does training for observers and "Know Your Rights," advocacy for immigrant rights with local government and police agencies, and public education/outreach around immigration issues.

WICIR: Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, wicir.org. WICIR offers direct aid to immigrant families in need and support for those affected by detentions, with an urgent response phone: (734) 355-2707

MIRC: Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, michiganimmigrant.org, legal support for immigrants. General immigrant services, (734) 239-6863; phone for detainees to call for free, (734) 794-9963; phone for families and friends of detainees to call, (734) 239-6863.

WCS: Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary, network of 15+ congregations supporting immigrants, https://www.facebook.com/WashtenawCongregationalSanctuary/.

NDCM: No Detention Centers in Michigan, opposes ICE detention and supports detainees, https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/. ■

You and your family are invited to
The Jewish Cultural Society's
Community 2nd Night Seder!

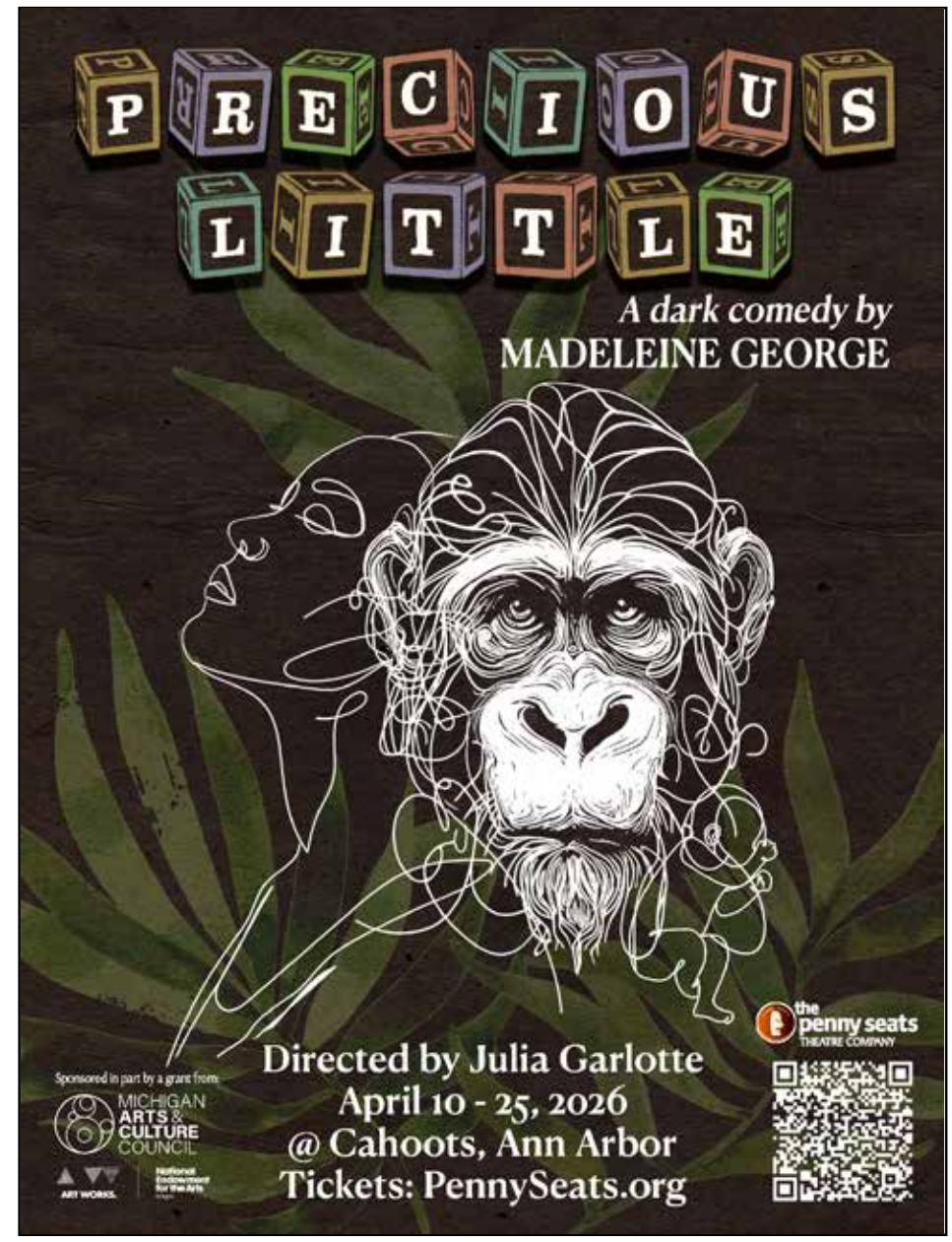
Thursday,
April 2, 2026
6:00 pm at the JCC!

Secular Humanistic Haggadah and a shared potluck meal. Food should be **meat and nut free** and Kosher for Pesach in a sephardic tradition (**no leaven; rice and lentils are okay**).

Registration Available At:
www.jewishculturalsociety.org

Donations are appreciated, but not required.

Jewish Cultural Society

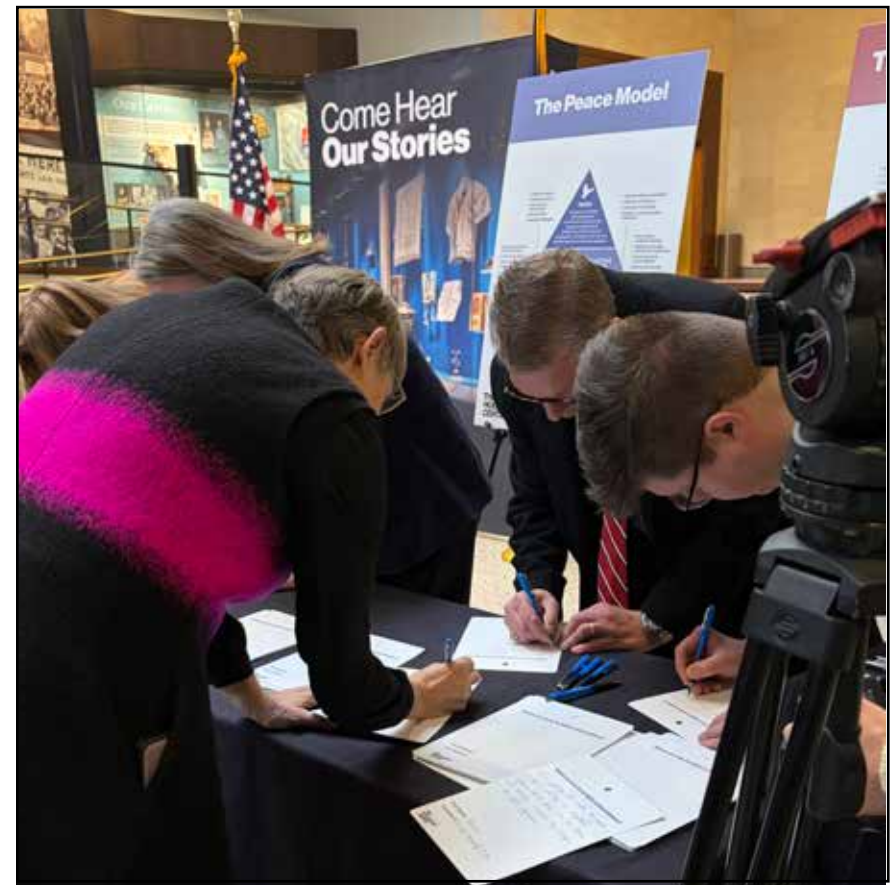


JCRC brings International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony to Lansing

By Jewish Federation Staff

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, in partnership with the Zekelman Holocaust Center, convened Michigan state senators and representatives for an International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration at the Michigan State Capitol. The audience included about 30 legislators and staffers, particularly notable as the House was not in session.

Rep. Jason Hoskins lights a candle together with Rep. Jennifer Conlin and Rep. Stephen Wooden



Legislators fill out remembrance and action cards

The program included remarks from Jewish Federation CEO Eileen Freed, and an address by the family of Holocaust survivor Frieda Langnas. Freed shared that the world Jewish community still has not reached pre-WWII population levels, and that much culture and potential was lost. "We have a strong motivation to build and sustain flourishing Jewish communities," she said. She added that "even as we endeavor to focus on the joys of Jewish culture, practice, and peoplehood … we find it necessary to focus ever more resources on addressing antisemitism and protecting our communities from those who deny our history, distort our peoplehood, and seek to kill us." She called on those present to commit to greater education about the lessons of the Holocaust, advocating to fight the scourge and proliferation of online hate, condemning and fighting against the trampling of civil rights in the U.S. and providing more support for marginalized communities to protect their institutions and members.

Michigan State University student Skyler Elbinger, representing Michigan State Hillel, spoke about the growing danger of antisemitism in America and around the world, and Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld, CEO of the Zekelman Holocaust Center, shared the Center's educational model which focuses on a pyramid of peace and a pyramid of hate. In the pyramid of hate, normalization of hate speech is followed by increasing levels of discrimination and violent action. He suggested that the pyramid of peace could have the opposite effect.

The 14 legislators present helped light six candles representing the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Those present included, among others, Senate Majority Leader Senator Winnie Brinks, local legislators Senator Sue Shinks and Representative Jen Conlin, and Jewish caucus members Senator Jeremy Moss and Representative Noah Arbit, who both spoke eloquently.

Community Relations Director Rabbi Asher Lopatin reflected, "In these times when many Jews are afraid to be open about their Jewish identity because of the rise of antisemitism, it meant so much that 14 members of our state legislature came together, on short notice, to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day."

State Representative Jason Hoskins wrote, "I was honored to attend an event at the Michigan Capitol to observe this day of remembering the victims of the Holocaust and recommitting to confronting hatred."

Rabbi Mayerfeld invited those present to complete reflection cards, committing to fighting hate in our communities and state. The ceremony concluded with the singing of "Ani Ma'amin" which was sung by thousands of Jews as they were transported and herded into gas chambers by the Nazis and their allies.

Additional cosponsors included Michigan Jewish Council, MSU Hillel, and the Jewish Federation of Detroit. For more information about the JCRC, contact Rabbi Asher Lopatin (asher@jewishannarbor.org). ■

From commemoration to celebration: 2nd annual Israeli block party

By Amichay Findling, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

This April, two meaningful events will take place in our community: Israel's Memorial Day ceremony and Israel's Independence Day Party. Many of Ann Arbor's Jewish organizations are teaming together to create a deep educational and cultural experience for each program.

Shared fates

The theme for Yom HaZikaron (Israeli Memorial Day) is the shared fates of Jews in Israel and around the world. The ceremony takes place Monday, April 20, at 6:30 p.m. at Beth Israel Congregation and will commemorate those dear to local community members who lost their lives as part of the struggles faced by Israel and the Jewish people. Contrary to what many think, Israel's Memorial Day is not solely about honoring fallen IDF soldiers. The observance memorializes all those lost in Israel's wars or terror attacks anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, Ann Arbor is not a stranger to antisemitism, and recent antisemitic attacks have killed people in the U.S. and around the world — notably, the three US Jews murdered since last year's Yom HaZikaron and the horrific massacre at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia in which 15 people were killed and 40 more were injured.

If you would like to share the story of a loved one or someone dear to you who lost their life during military service or in a terror attack, please contact Jewish Federation's Israel and Overseas Program Manager Amichay Findling (amichay@jewishannarbor.org) to discuss them being commemorated during the ceremony.

Special guests from Israel

To provide depth and meaning to both Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israeli musical group HaShayara Project will be in Ann Arbor to perform and interact with the community. The band, whose name means "The Caravan," comprises five educators and musicians from the Dror Israel movement. They use music as a powerful educational and therapeutic tool to help communities connect with their Jewish and/or Israeli identity. They create interactive and participatory musical experiences in which participants are invited to listen, sing, and be part of the performance. Each musical experience blends well-known Israeli songs with personal storytelling, improvisation, and original material written together with the youth and families with whom they work.

The Israeli Block Party: A Journey through Israel

Wednesday, April 22, from 5 to 8 p.m., the JCC will transform into a unique, immersive Israel experience in which visitors can travel around Israel without leaving Ann Arbor. The Israel Block Party is the biggest Jewish party of the season featuring live Israeli music with HaShayara; a "shuk style" market for tasty food; and art and activities for adults, teenagers, and children.

The Israeli Block Party is a collaboration between local Jewish organizations and congregations. Advance ticket purchase is strongly suggested. Tickets will be $10 per person in advance through the JLive app, or $15 at the door.

Free admission will be granted to event volunteers. To volunteer or learn more, contact Amichay. More information and tickets for Yom Hazikaron and the Israel Block Party are available on JLive. ■

Eventful Purim expected with the Ann Arbor ShinShinim

Ori and Carmel, the Ann Arbor ShinShinim

As the months of January and February went by, the Ann Arbor ShinShinim were busy and excited as they planned for three big occasions: Tu B'Shvat, a holiday that is very special for Israelis, their long-awaited mid-year break at home, and finally, preparing for Purim, coming up in early March.

Let's start from the end: Purim is a wonderful holiday for Israelis. It is the only true carnival celebrated in Israel, with the craziest parties for all ages — from preschools to nursing homes, everybody wears costumes, exchanges gifts and "mishloach manot," and parties as wildly as they can.

The craziest parties for the ShinShinim were as teenagers. With fun music, costumes, and games, it was always the best day and night of the year. This is why they want to bring the Israeli Purim spirit to Ann Arbor as well: bringing Israeli spirit is their Shlichut (mission)!

They have an exciting plan for an Israeli-style Purim Costume Karaoke party for teens in Ann Arbor taking place March 8. They chose karaoke "because it's the funniest way to embarrass yourself … lucky that we'll all hide behind masks!" There will be games, food, and "mishloach manot." Visit JLive for more information.

The Shinshinim will bring Purim spirit to younger children and families as well. They are involved in Purim celebrations being planned at the Hebrew Day School, Temple Beth Emeth, and the big joint event with Chabad and the JCC. Finally, there will be a special Purim party for Israeli families taking place at the JCC on Sunday morning, March 1.

Late in January, right when arctic weather hit Michigan with winds, snow, and freezing temperatures, it was time to celebrate Tu B'Shvat. Here in Michigan, it seems like strange timing. Why would you celebrate nature and trees when it is all frozen and covered with snow? Well, this is a holiday that was "invented" in Israel, where the climate is different, there's hardly any snow, and in January the rainy winter already fades away and slowly clears its way to spring. The ShinShinim talked about it in their Jewish Story time, which took place on a very snowy Sunday morning at the downtown library. "We read a beautiful story about trees — how their seeds travel and sprout, how young saplings face the elements to grow and become big, strong trees." Together with the participating children, they planted various herbs from Eretz Yisrael in little earth pots to spread scents of mediterranean sun and the land of Israel.

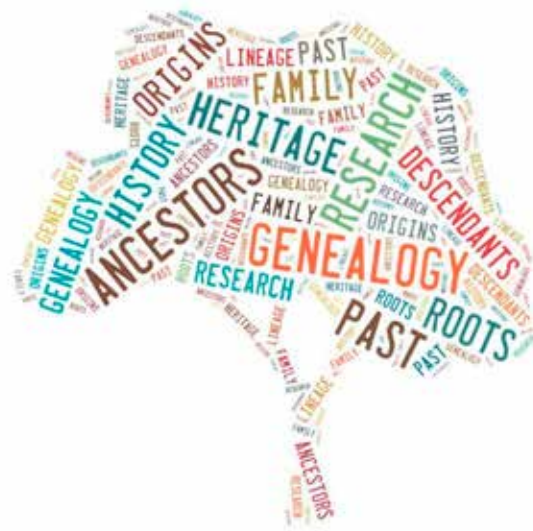
As the winter got to its deepest cold, shortly after the famous Michigan "Groundhog Day," the ShinShinim reached the mid-point of their Shlichut. It's hard to believe that six months had already passed! The ShinShinim embarked on their long-awaited home leave to see family and friends they had not seen for six months! They were thinking of Ann Arbor during their visit and brought back delicious Israeli surprises to their friends. Also, while in Israel, they had the opportunity to meet Ann Arbor's next ShinShininim, Mia and Hadar.

The second thing that happened in February is that the ShinShinim changed host families. One of the wonderful things about being ShinShinim is the opportunity to stay for an extended period with wonderful host families, sharing their day-to-day lives as well as their holidays and special occasions. This is a great way to make friends for life! The ShinShinim truly thank Bryan and Melissa, Joe and Robin, and their wonderful kids and extended families for their warm welcome and hospitality, and they are looking forward to making memories with their new host families!

For more details about engaging with the ShinShinim or hosting next year's cohort, contact Amichay Findling (amichay@jewishannarbor.org).■

Washtenaw Jewish genealogy group update

By Beth Dwoskin



Where did your Jewish ancestors come from? That's the basic question that animates Jewish genealogists. Like other Americans, Jews became interested in genealogy after the 1976 publication of the book Roots, by Alex Haley, which triggered a nationwide interest in genealogy that continues in our day.

In the digital era, genealogy has become a vastly easier pursuit. Many vital records and census records in America have been digitized, and dedicated volunteers have had tremendous success digitizing Jewish records in western and central Europe. Contrary to popular belief, Jewish vital records were kept by local governments and municipalities, not by synagogues, and so were not destroyed in the Holocaust.

In Washtenaw County, there's now a formal group for Jewish genealogists, the Washtenaw Jewish Genealogy Circle, under the leadership of Ruth Kraut and Steve Leber. Our group wants to help people to get started in Jewish genealogy or to overcome their brick walls, as well as to assist in gathering local Jewish community data.

For newcomers, the group is ready to help genealogists begin their journey, usually by filling in a simple pedigree chart. We're especially hoping to invite bet-mitzvah age children to this process of self-discovery.

Some other goals are to help document local synagogue memorial plaques, to verify local cemetery data, to search for local genealogical material in the Bentley Library, and to introduce genealogy to teenagers and adults.

For more experienced genealogists, we hope to discuss family history documentation and storytelling as well as methods to create legacies for our findings. Everyone is welcome to join the group by writing to: washtenawjewishgengroups@google-groups.com. ■

A2J Climate Circle

Climate care, classroom, community

By Lauren I. Zinn

Lauren I. Zinn

How do we teach our children in the religious school classroom about climate care and maintain connection to our community?

In addition to how we teach through drama, art, games, etc., we must also consider what we teach and the underlying pedagogy. I believe Jewish educators need to teach students more than Jewish teachings about caring for the Earth. They also need to teach what other religions say about ecological stewardship. *Why?* Because we all share this Earth and students are not getting this wisdom elsewhere.

Welcome to The Interspiritual Classroom (TIC) where students (of all ages) learn inherited or assigned religious tradition(s) while also learning about others traditions. Let me explain how the interspiritual community manifests in the religious school classroom using climate/earth care as an example.

The first of my 3-part model for TIC includes teaching the 4 C's (code, creed, customs, community) of a "Home Religion" — in my case, Judaism. Here, my students learned concepts and current examples of *bal tashchit* (not destroying), *shomrei adamah* (guardians of the Earth), and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). We even emailed the legal counsel to Israel's Chief Rabbinate regarding *shmitah* (resting the land).

The second part of TIC is "Interfaith Orientation" which, in this case, included visiting an Amish farm to learn their relationship between religion and earth care. We also learned key concepts of different religions' approaches to ecological stewardship through The Green Rule poster. The poster is an image of a tree with each leaf representing a different religion, its symbol, and a quote from its scripture that supports the Green Rule: *Do unto the Earth as you would have it do unto you* — a riff on the Golden Rule. Displaying the poster in the classroom also conveyed the importance of other religions alongside one's own.

The third and pedagogical part of TIC helps teachers apply the ten Value-Tensions (VTs) for transforming how we teach Judaism (or your religion) to align with humanity's spiritual development. In this case, the poster supports *interdependence*, the result of a dialectic between independent and dependent pedagogies.

As we evolve from an "ethno-centric" to a "world/kosmo-centric" worldview (see my book *BELONG TO THE WORLD BRING YOUR TRIBE: A New Vision for Judaism*), the "what" of teaching Judaism must also evolve. TIC is one model for helping religion teachers teach in a way that expands our worldview and prepares children for interspiritual rights and responsibilities. ■

Nourish Kitchen: Fighting climate change and rising prices

By JFS staff member

When looking at the USDA food price outlook, the current trend is an uncomfortable increase in recent years due to inflation, with products costing 27.09% more than in 2020. That's why, according to Sarah Schneider Hong, Chief Program Officer at Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County (JFSWC), the need for public food pantries and meal services is of highest importance. Also critical is meeting these needs with climate-conscious practices.

"JFS's Nourish services help local community members access healthy, fresh food responsibly," Hong said.

JFS's Shalom Kitchen — a commercial kitchen at JFS's headquarters — emphasizes scratch-made meals from ingredients sourced locally. "We try to work with local purveyors so that the food we acquire is not travelling long distances unnecessarily to avoid extra (carbon) emissions. We engage local farms and support local agriculture," Hong said. "We recycle heavily from boxes that were breaking down, and we purchase and prioritize recyclable packaging for all the meals we produce," Hong said. "The meals that we produce are plant-forward — healthier for the environment and for meal recipients."

When it comes to cooking for Meals on Wheels and Senior Cafes, Nourish Senior Manager of Culinary Services Nic Scheckel uses specific strategies to reduce food waste. "We order ingredients specifically based on the recipes we are producing, which greatly reduces excess product and unnecessary waste before food ever enters the kitchen. When surplus ingredients do occur, they are handled intentionally. Extra items are either frozen for later use or incorporated into other menu items whenever possible. I've also developed menus with overlapping, versatile ingredients, allowing the same components to be used across multiple recipes. This flexibility helps us efficiently utilize products while maintaining quality and consistency."

JFS also partners with fellow Ann Arbor nonprofit Food Gatherers, a local food bank — 80% of food distributed to the community through Nourish comes from Food Gatherers. Notably, Food Gatherers prides itself on climate-friendly practices and food rescue operations. "Food is a great equalizer," Hong said. "While we may all have our own preferences or medical and cultural needs for what we eat, we all need food to survive. It is a basic human need." She adds that Nourish "provides reliability to vulnerable neighbors in need in an unreliable world."

nourish
Feeding Our Community

While Nourish strives for climate sustainability, financial sustainability is heavy on JFS's mind. "We need reliable and local multi-year funding to ensure the pantry's sustainability." ■

Persuading the "other" Adam: What Rav Soloveitchik can teach us

By Rabbi Nadav Caine, Beth Israel Congregation

For thousands of years, Jewish commentators have offered various interpretations of the two Adams of Genesis. In chapter one, Adam is created in the image of God and told to rule over and subdue the earth and its lifeforms. In chapter two, Adam is created from adamah, the earth, is split into two, and is told to serve and guard the earth. "Adam 2" seems a natural environmentalist, with "Adam 1" seeming to be the opposite.

In The Lonely Man of Faith (1965), the great "Rav" Joseph Soloveitchik argues that every individual contains both Adams and is destined to oscillate between these two conflicting states. Adam 1 seeks to advance and conquer, while Adam 2 is called to retreat and serve. Nevertheless, modern society privileges Adam 1, praising the "dignity" that comes with being "master" of the earth: from industrialization, to individualism, to hierarchy, to technology and science. The Adam 2 within us, and especially when it rises to the level of consciousness, is a "man of faith" who seeks the few others who also see ultimate purpose in service, community, and a relationship with the holiness within all creation. This person of faith will always be lonely within a secular, technological society that prizes Adam 1's success while often ignoring or dismissing Adam 2's spiritual depth.

As an environmentalist rabbi, I resonate with Adam 2 as describing the overlap between my religiosity and my environmentalism.

Rabbi Nadav Caine

I struggle, however, with Soloveitchik's praise of Adam 1 as a person of "dignity." The Hebrew word he is thinking of is "kavod," and this can mean both "dignity" and "glory." I understand those seeking conquest of nature think of acquiring glory, yet Soloveitchik wrote the book in English, and he specifically chose to use the word "dignity" rather than "glory" to describe mastery of Nature. I don't want to see "dignity" as a quality of ecological exploitation and materialism: I only want to see dignity as a quality of the holiness within creation that gives everything from a cow to a tree fundamental rights.

But Soloveitchik is challenging us to see true human dignity in mastery of nature. This teaches me how to talk to a non-environmentalist because they see dignity, not just profit or comfort, in the mastery of the earth. It is Adam 1, after all, who cures diseases, invents dwarf rice, and builds desalination plants. That is worthy of dignity!

So, to appeal to a person who leans into their Adam 1 side is to focus on how they can increase their dignity through using nature to solve climate change. Adam 1 most assuredly does not want to live off-grid with a composting toilet and a vegetable garden. But Adam 1 loves being challenged with a technological puzzle. Challenge them to invent a low-cost clean energy source or battery, a new kind of water filtration system, lab grown meat, and appeal to their desire to master nature for a human purpose and their own glory and they will get interested. Skip the conversation about animal rights and carbon emissions: challenge them to develop a food source that produces less methane and less infection in cows.

Adam 1 likes to use nature, invent things, and solve problems. If we lean into appealing to those instincts, we have a partner. As Soloveitchik reminds us, both Adams reside within each of us. We cannot unify the environment without unifying ourselves. ■

48 hours in Damascus part 4 of 4

By David Horovitz, introduced by Rabbi Asher Lopatin

Like many of us, I had followed closely the news of the rapid fall of the brutal Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, defeating Assad's troops and his allies Hezbollah and Iran. Nevertheless, I was surprised to receive a call in February of 2025 from a Muslim Syrian friend and partner in Muslim Jewish relations in Michigan urging me to join a small group of Jews returning to Syria. With the approval of my dear wife, I joined two Syrian rabbis (father and son), and coaxed a friend, also involved in interfaith relations, to come along. What followed was an incredible experience that led to organizing my own trip to Syria in September through the Syrian Foreign Ministry, bringing 10 Jewish leaders, some of them from Israel, to Syria on a Goodwill Mission. The article you will read was written by one of them, David Horovitz, Editor and Founder of the Times of Israel.

Jill Joshowitz stands before the Dura-Europas panels (Photo by David

Scenes preserved for 2,000 years

Leaving Idlbi and the Foreign Ministry, we speed to the National Museum of Damascus for what turns out to be the most extraordinary part of our visit.

One member of the group, Jill Joshowitz, is a Judaica curator and archivist based in Pittsburgh who is just completing a book, *Visual Exemplars: Biblical Figures in the Art and Literature of Jewish Late Antiquity*.

She has spent years researching the wall paintings of the Dura-Europos synagogue, a 2,000-year-old shul in eastern Syria that was rediscovered in 1932. The seven-meter-high, vividly-colored frescoes that lined the walls of the synagogue's assembly hall near-miraculously survived: The Roman army fortified buildings at the city's walls, including the synagogue, by filling them with earth and debris. Thus the art was encased and protected from destruction and the effects of the elements, and the building lay buried through the millennia until the archaeologists arrived almost a century ago.

The painting-covered walls were dismantled and moved to the National Museum decades ago, and there they are known to have remained. But Joshowitz, as we make the journey over, does not know how they are displayed, what condition they are in, or whether anyone — even a visiting, government-invited delegation of Jews — is ever allowed to see them.

"This will either be one of the most disappointing days of my life or one of the very best," she says as we arrive.

It turns out to be one of the very best.

The wall paintings are, indeed, held at the museum, reassembled in — or rather as — a carefully maintained, unlit room of their own.

They are also, for reasons of preservation, closed to the public. But requests have been made, and authorizations secured, and thus Rima Khawam, the museum chief curator, shows us into what is manifestly a sacred chamber.

We all marvel at the staggering display: floor to high-ceilinged scenes of biblical events, 2,000 years old — the earliest surviving series of figurative paintings in a Jewish house of worship showing Old Testament events — gloriously, vibrantly colored, with a reconstruction of the decorated ceiling atop.

For Joshowitz, this is a life-changing experience — gazing at the material she pored over from a distance, and never seriously expected to see for herself, in all its glory.

We all start asking her to explain the scenes around us — the Binding of Isaac here, the Exodus from Egypt there, the three depictions of the biblical menorah. We ask her about the significance of the multiple hands at the top of numerous scenes — from a period, notes Joshowitz, a millennium before Maimonides had clarified that the Divine power was not a subject for literal depiction. The artists "knew that they should not attempt to draw God."

Khawam gravitates toward her, and soon the two are walking slowly around the room, pointing out elements to each other, discussing their significance, maximizing each other's understanding.

Somehow, all of our drivers, numerous security people, and several Syrian army soldiers have been drawn to the room, and are staring, as we all are, open-mouthed at the mesmeric paintings around us. "I can't imagine when a rabbi last got to see this," says Chitrik, similarly spellbound.

We lose track of time, but the rest of the day's itinerary beckons. There are other exhibits Khawam wants to show us. Joshowitz asks if, perhaps, she might be allowed to stay with the paintings for a few more minutes while we move on. The request is granted.

Remains from Jobar

Khawam has one more surprise, which she apparently decides to show us on the spur of the moment. She leads us to a different part of the museum complex, to an office turned improvised storeroom far from the public eye.

This room, she says, holds material from the destroyed synagogue at Jobar — the scene of our first stop yesterday. It was brought here during the Bashar al-Assad presidency, in 2017, "and now we are keeping it until it can be exhibited in a different way or at least restored."

Jill Joshowitz stands before the Dura-Europas panels (Photo by David Horovitz)

Materials from the destroyed Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue at Jobar, stored at the National Museum of Damascus, September 16, 2025. Torah scrolls are in the boxes at the far end of the room. (David Horovitz / Times of

We crowd into the small room. Near the door is a large container with mainly fairly modern synagogue relics — including a Ner Tamid (Eternal Flame) lamp, an Ottoman-era light, and material that hung from the walls. At the far end of the room, in ammunition-style wooden crates, are Torah scrolls, long since robbed of their traditional coverings, vulnerable parchment relics from the war zone.

"Everything here has the residue of the fire and fighting," says Khawam. "There are many materials — wood, textile, leather, metal — and every material needs different restoration. We have experts, but we also lack restoration materials for our heritage. It was not easy to manage the restoration of our own archaeology. We are trying to fulfill our responsibility to maintain our collections in a good state — for preservation, protection, and restoration."

What, I ask her, does she need? Does she need Jewish expertise for these artifacts, which are mainly modern rather than archaeological? "From any international experts," she replies.

She then allows me to take three photographs of the room, pressing me to take care to stress her message above — that they are trying to take responsible care of this material, so that it can be preserved and made available for others to see.

The consequences of failure

We speed again through the packed, chaotic streets — much more jammed than months ago, I'm told, in part because restrictions on imported cars have been lifted — to meet two government ministers. Both of them exude goodwill to this Jewish group, and steer clear of any Israel-related controversy.

Both also convey the sense of how fateful a moment this is for the new leadership — that there is a country to try to stabilize, heal, and rebuild, and success is anything but guaranteed.

Mohammad Nidal al-Shaar, the minister of economy and industry, who managed to resign intact from a similar role in the Assad era, says Syria "is at a turning point … Before we had grudges and slogans, now we have to have togetherness and cooperation."

"This is the only chance for Syria," he says with searing conviction, when explaining why it took him all of three minutes to accept Sharaa's invitation to take this job. "If we don't support this opportunity, Syria will be gone. And it will be a disaster with terrible implications for Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and northern Israel."

Shaar says the new leadership is "starting from sub-zero, but that also means an opportunity to start afresh," with "new spirit and new management." In his field, that means moving to a "free, competitive, economy with checks and balances … from an economy that was chaotic."

More generally, he goes on, "I believe there is a self-correcting mechanism: There was something wrong; we have to fix it."

He says he thinks that "the world has decided that Syria is going to be a stable country — as it did with South Korea."

Continues on pg 21

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Hasidic Women in the Media: A Lecture-Performance

Guest Speaker: Jessica Roda (Georgetown University)
Performer: Malchy Goldman
Tuesday, March 17 | 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Room 2022, South Thayer Building
RSVP: https://myumi.ch/bV2rx

The 36th Annual Belin Lecture: Orthodox Jewish Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics

Guest Speaker: Ayala Fader (Fordham University)
Thursday, March 26
Pendleton Room, Michigan Union
RSVP: https://myumi.ch/15PN8
5:30 PM Reception, 6 PM Lecture, 7 PM Book Signing

This lecture unpacks the rise of Orthodox Jewish women "wellness influencers" on platforms like Instagram, revealing how their voices echo, blend with, and differentiate from their conservative Christian counterparts.

We are pleased to provide reasonable accommodations to enable full participation in this event. Please contact js-event-coord@umich.edu to request disability accommodations or with any questions/concerns.

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Week 2 - June 14-18
Week 3 - June 21-25
Week 4 - July 26-30

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Week 2 - July 17-19

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Aaron Bell
Assoc. Head Coach

Gunnar Schmidt
Assoc. Coach

Priscilla Barletta
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JCC's Book Series Lunch & Learn: Songs for the Brokenhearted by Ayelet Tsabari

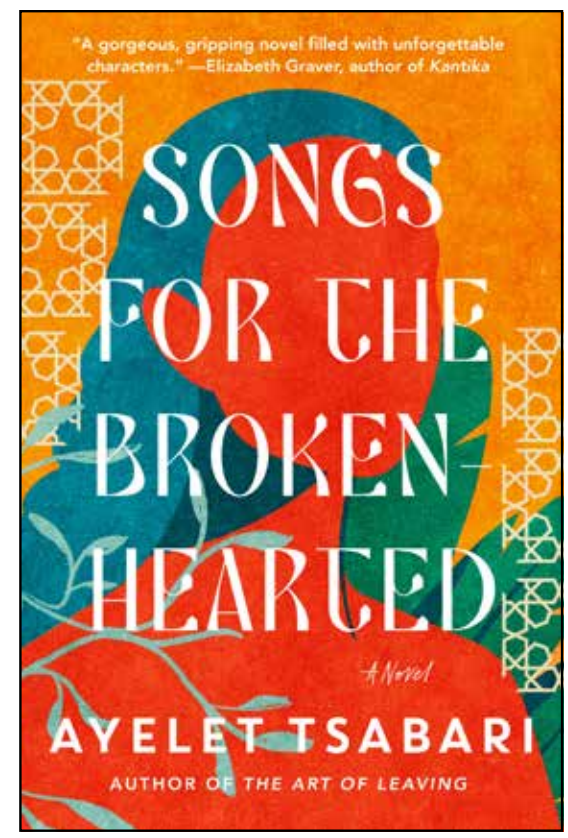
By Eva Kubacki, Ann Arbor JCC

Ayelet Tsabari

Come join us at the Ann Arbor JCC for the March Book Series event, a Lunch & Learn with a virtual visit from Ayelet Tsabari, author of *Songs for the Brokenhearted*. The program will take place on Thursday, March 26, from 12–1:30 p.m. The delicious lunch of kosher food with Yemeni treats will start at noon with the author talk beginning promptly at 12:30 p.m.

Songs for the Brokenhearted tells the story of a Yemeni Jewish mother and daughter and their stories across generations. The main character, Zohara, is a Yemeni Jewish woman living in New York City. Upon the death of her mother, Zohara returns to Israel to be with family. There, she discovers shocking family secrets that force her to reckon with everything she thought she knew about her parents, her heritage, and her future. The novel explores the immigration of Yemeni Jews to Israel in the 1950s, secret love, music, and more through the stories of Zohara and her family.

The cost of this program is $12.50 per person. Registration is open now on JLive.app! ■



Raanana and new day camps at JCC

By Sorrel Thomson, Director of Camp and Youth Programming, AnnArborJCC

Camp Raanana is a pluralistic Jewish day camp that strives to create a transformative and fun summer experience. We provide each camper and staff member a safe environment that nurtures identity, builds character, and promotes a true sense of community.

Camp Raanana has held a special place in the heart of this community for decades. The summer of 2025 still resonates in the minds of campers, counselors, and families connected to our JCC day camp, and the Raanana team is eager to carry forward its positive momentum into the summer of 2026.

Located at the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center in Chelsea, 30 minutes from the Ann Arbor JCC, nestled in Michigan's white pines, Camp Raanana features old forest paths, an archery range and, of course, the famous waterfront right on Little Cedar Lake. The number of camper groups and their sizes can vary from one week to the next, with placement being flexible to best fit each camper's needs.

The Lake is a point of pride at Camp Raanana. The lakefront area is always a little cooler and breezier than the rest of camp, and for so many campers it is their favorite place to play. Camp Raanana is thrilled to welcome back Anna Wetzel for the summer of 2026, her second consecutive season as Waterfront Director. For 4 years, Anna was a YMCA Summer Camps Lifeguard, and as a special education teacher she continues to teach children how to swim during the academic year, and of course, she is CPR/AED certified.

Many campers improve in their swimming ability throughout the course of the summer, but formal lessons are not built into the regular camp day schedule. Following a swim assessment at the beginning of each week, campers are allowed in sectioned off areas varying in depth depending on their ability. At Camp Raanana, we strive to help campers gain a greater sense of comfort and confidence in a natural water setting. Minnows, aquatic plant life, and sand can take some getting used to, but campers adjust and learn to love playing in the lake with friends and counselors.

Camp Raanana Atid Program

Our Middle School and entering High School campers join the Atid Leadership Program (7th–9th grade). Atid, a Hebrew word which means "future" in English, is a program specifically designed to meet the needs of our older campers while challenging them to grow as individuals. Atid weekly programming consists of some days at our campsite participating in traditional camp activities, and excursion days via a passenger van to either service projects or field trips in the community. Some of the activities from summer 2025 included a leadership conference, volunteering at the Farm on Jennings and with Jewish Family Services and field trips to Treerunner, ZapZone, the Detroit Zoo, a Tigers game, and more.

On Mondays and Tuesdays, Atid enjoys programming at the Cedar Lake campsite with the rest of Raanana, sometimes joining younger groups in activities where they have the opportunity to lead by example and act as positive role models for the younger campers. Atid also participates in its own programming at camp including discussion-based activities about the importance of nature, spending time outdoors, and building relationships with new friends in this summer camp setting.

Camp Raanana is for everyone. Rooted in the Jewish value of (shmirat ha adama/caring for the earth), our camp's mission is to help children create unforgettable memories, foster lifelong friendships, and grow while immersed in nature.

At least one senior (18+) and junior counselor lead each group in their activities, where they strongly encourage participation and always aspire for a good try. Camp Raanana engages in Jewish, Israeli, and Hebrew programming by singing songs to celebrate Shabbat, performing skits to learn Hebrew words, and learning about Israeli culture from the Ann Arbor Shinshinim (Israeli High School graduates).

Exploring Judaism, Israeli culture, and the Hebrew language through song, play, and arts and crafts, campers at Raanana connect these experiences to our camp values and carry them to effect positive change in their lives and the world around them.

Camp GlobeTrotters: Sports and Cooking Camp

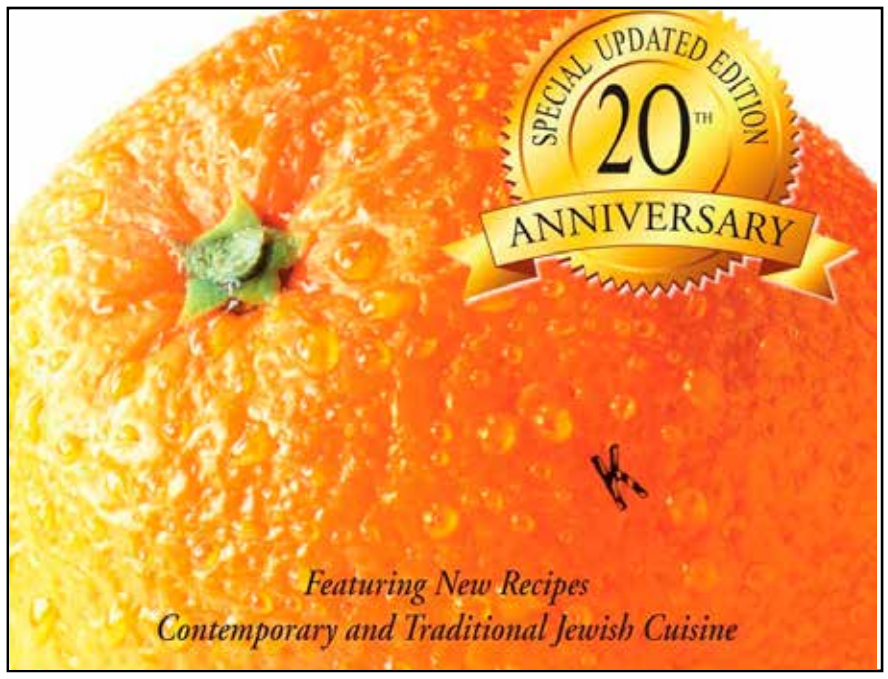
In addition to the wonderful Camp Raanana experience at Cedar Lake in Chelsea, we are proud to introduce you to the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor's Sports and Cooking Camp: Camp GlobeTrotters. Premiering in the summer of 2026, Camp GlobeTrotters will take place at the JCC facility and consist of two different programs; one focused on playing different sports and one on learning to cook dishes from different countries around the world. Rates, registration dates, and hours of Camp GlobeTrotters will mirror Camp Raanana.

Multi-Week Summer Rebate Plan

Camp Raanana will reward a system credit rebate at the end of the summer for attending 3 or more weeks. Families can use this credit to pay for camp next summer or for any JCC programs throughout the year, such as KidZone, ECC, or Enrichment Programs. (3–5 weeks, earn back $20 per week; 6+ weeks, earn back $40 per week). ■

Food for welcoming Aviv, the Spring season

By Lonnie Sussman



March is a beautiful month that hints at spring flowers and summer vegetable gardens, and then gives us the cruel reminder of "not yet." Purim this year was at the very beginning of March which means Pesach is a month from now! I worked on prepping for Purim recipes but then realized this issue won't be available until just after the holiday. My plan was to include more Sephardi recipes for Purim, and I have a few for this column, but I'll include ones that will work for Pesach as well. I'm not focusing on the Seders but on the rest of the week and month.

Passover Soup with Chicken Dumplings

Cucina Ebraica by Joyce Goldstein

Serves 8

Make your traditional chicken soup for the seder but try this later in the week. This recipe includes rice but I'm including an alternate version as well.

1 large boneless whole chicken breast, about ⅔ pound, ground
1 egg, lightly beaten
⅓ cup matzoh meal
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Pinch of ground cinnamon
8–10 cups chicken broth
½ to1 cup white rice
8 egg yolks, separated (save the whites for baking a cake)

Use a large bowl to combine the ground chicken breast, beaten egg, matzoh meal, salt, pepper, and cinnamon, and bring to a boil. Form the mixture into walnut-sized balls and refrigerate until ready to cook. Use a large soup pot and bring the chicken broth to a boil. Then add the rice and chicken balls, lower the heat to medium-low, and cover for the last 5 minutes. Cook for about 20 minutes until the rice and the chicken balls are cooked. Just before serving the soup carefully poach the yolks in the broth until semi-firm.

An alternative and simpler variation is to stir 4 broken matzohs and 4 egg yolks into the hot chicken broth that is flavored with cinnamon and skip the chicken balls. This soup is called "minestra dayenu" or "that would have been enough" I can picture the chefs saying "I'm too tired to make the chicken balls."

Zucchini Kugel

California Kosher, is a collection of recipes from the Women's League of Adat Ari El Synagogue in North Hollywood, California.

This recipe came from the Israeli mother-in-law of one of the contributors to this cookbook. The recipe serves 6–8 but can be doubled or tripled or more.

1 tbs oil
1 pound zucchini, unpeeled and grated
3 carrots, grated
1 potato, grated
½ onion, grated
3 eggs, beaten but can use 4 for a fluffier kugel
2–4 tbs matzo meal
¼ tsp each of salt, pepper, dried basil, and dried oregano

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place oil in the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish and place in oven to heat. Use a large bowl and mix all the ingredients. Start with the 2 tbs of matzo meal and add enough to give the mixture a pudding-like consistency. Pour the mixture into the heated baking dish and brush lightly with more oil. Bake for about 1 hour or until the top turns golden.

Bialystok Tsimmes with Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Prunes, and Apricots

Jewish Cooking in America by Joan Nathan

This recipe is for a friend who was interested in a good tsimmes recipe. "Tsimmes" is Yiddish for a "making a big deal over something." Of course, there are other recipes for tzimmes, but this is the best because this is what my mom (z"l) made. Simcha/Simi bat Etka, her name continues to be a blessing.

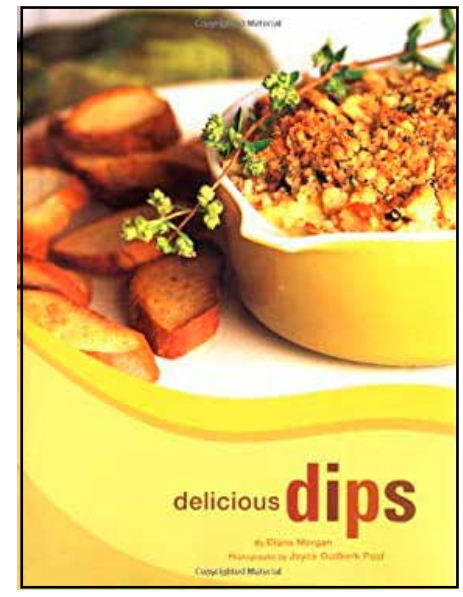
Serves 10 and would work for a seder or for Shabbat dinner.

3 lbs short ribs, flanken (at the kosher butcher) or chuck roast, cut into 2-inch cubes
Salt and pepper to taste
3 medium onions, sliced
2 tbs vegetable oil or chicken fat
6 cups water to cover the meat
3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and left whole
5 carrots, peeled and left whole
3 large white potatoes, peeled and left whole
¾ pound dried, pitted prunes
¾ pound dried apricots (everyone's favorite ingredient)
¼ cup brown sugar
Optional ¼ cup apricot jam
Dash of nutmeg
½ tsp cinnamon
Juice of 1 lemon and slivered rind and juice of 1 orange

Use a 4-quart casserole or Dutch oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the meat and onions in the dish and add water to cover the meat. Bake for 2 hours. At this stage you can remove the pot and refrigerate overnight to remove the fat. Cut the sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and carrots in quarters and add the prunes, apricots, brown sugar, apricot jam (optional), spices ,and lemon juice and orange rind and juice to the meat, and more water if needed.

Potato Kugel topping

Mix 1 large peeled and grated white potato (about 2 cups) with 2 cups matzoh meal, 2 eggs, 2 tbs chopped fresh parsley, 1 coarsely grated onion, 1 tbs vegetable oil, salt and pepper to taste, and ½ cup water. Mix to make a sticky dough. Flour your hands and spread the potato dough and press very thinly over the tsimmes and bake, covered, for 45 minutes. Uncover and taste test for additional salt and pepper and cook another 30 minutes or until the liquid disappears and the top turns crusty. Serve hot.



Roasted Butternut Squash Dip with Crème Fraîche

Delicious Dips by Diane Morgan

I'm including 2 recipes for dips for the rest of the month.

1–2 lb Butternut squash, cut in half lengthwise and seeded (save the seeds to roast separately)
1small yellow onion, cut in half lengthwise and trim the stem and root ends
2 large cloves garlic, leave skin on
2 tbs olive oil
2 tbs crème fraîche
1¼ tsp salt
½ tsp nutmeg (freshly grated or ground)
⅛ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
Freshly ground white pepper (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush the flesh of the squash, onion, and garlic generously with olive oil and arrange the squash and onion cut-side down on a rimmed baking sheet. Tuck a garlic clove in each cavity of the squash. Roast until very tender, about 50 minutes. Allow to cool for about 20 minutes. Scoop out the flesh of the squash and place it in the bowl of a food processor after discarding the skin. Add the onion and squeeze the garlic into the bowl without the skin. Purée until smooth. Then add the crème fraîche and all the spices and blend again. Adjust spices after tasting. Serve this warm with pita chips or crostini.

Cauliflower Dip

Delicious Dips by Diane Morgan

Makes 2½ cups

Pita chip, bagel or tortilla chips work as the scoops for the dip.

1 head of cauliflower, about 1½ pounds, broken into florets and then halved
1¾ tsp Kosher salt
1 tbs olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
1 tbs curry powder
1 tbs sugar
1 cup whole-milk yogurt
¼ cup sour cream
⅓ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley
Dash of nutmeg and dash of cayenne pepper
Pepper to taste

Fill a 4-quart saucepan with 2 inches of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add the cauliflower and ¼ tsp salt. Partially cover the pan and adjust the heat to a simmer. Cook the cauliflower until tender when pierced with a fork, about 10 minutes. Drain completely and transfer to a bowl. Use a small sauté pan over medium heat and warm the olive oil and swirl it all over the pan. Add the onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the curry powder, remaining 1½ tsp of salt, and the sugar and stir constantly until the curry is fragrant, 1–2 minutes more. Use a fork to mash the cauliflower into very small pieces, add the onion mixture, and stir to combine. Then use a rubber spatula and stir in the yogurt, sour cream, parsley, nutmeg, cayenne, and a few grinds of pepper. Taste and adjust seasonings. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve immediately. ■

Bell's Diner, an Ann Arbor classic

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences

In many ways, Bell's Diner is a true Ann Arbor classic. Owned by Ben and Anna Kwon, Bell's has operated quietly in a small business strip since 1987 — for nearly 39 years, right next door to another Ann Arbor institution, Stadium Hardware. When you hear "diner" you might think of classic American food like eggs, sandwiches, or burgers. At Bell's you get that plus an entire menu of Korean delights. In the early days Bell's served diner classics and made Korean favorites for visiting friends and family. Once the townies noticed this, they started asking for the South Korean dishes too. On the day of our visit at least 50% of the tables were eating Korean dishes. We made sure to sample from all corners of the menu.

We visited Bell's at noon on a Sunday, when it was predictably busy. After a brief wait, we were seated in a comfortable booth which had a sliding divider to contract or expand the tabletop space based on the number of diners in the group. For a small dining room, it is a smart way to maximize seating capacity. Our server, who was pleasant and efficient, took our drink order while we made our dining plan.

To kick off our Bell's experience, we started off with the mandu — Korean vegetable dumplings. They were deep fried, served lava hot with a side of sticky sweet dipping sauce. The mandu were delicious on their own but a light touch of the sweet sauce really enhanced the savory vegetable filling.

From the breakfast corner, we ordered the Ann Arbor Omelet with tomatoes, green peppers, mushrooms, and swiss cheese. In addition, there is a choice of fresh spinach or zucchini; we selected the spinach. The omelet was packed with veggies and cheese, and the taste was optimized by adding a bit of salt. Honorable mention goes to the perfectly golden, hot, buttered sourdough toast. The portion was large enough to use a leftover piece of toast and remaining omelet to create an egg sandwich for breakfast the next day. A good piece of toast can't be beat.

From the burger corner came the true winner of our meal — the patty melt. We ordered it "deluxe" which meant that it came with the necessary french fries, lettuce, tomato, and a cup of coleslaw. The sourdough bread was perfectly grilled, the burger (sourced from Knight's Market) was flavorful and juicy, the American cheese — sometimes you have to have it — was thick and perfectly melted. Just right. This was a burger to return for. We also tried the house-made chili made with beef and kidney beans. The recipe was unusual — a little sweet with a hint of cinnamon and maybe clove. We wondered about the recipe and couldn't quite put our finger on the flavors. It had no kick and no hint of chili powder. What belongs in a chili is controversial enough, but based on the unusual recipe, we would not order it again.

Finally, the Korean corner. It was one of the things that drew us to try the restaurant over the other diners in the neighborhood. We ordered the classic Bi Bim Bop with beef with an over-easy egg on top. The egg was perfectly cooked, and the runny yolk added richness to the generous portions of vegetables and tender beef and rice. Cucumber kimchi and the bottle of Gochujang (a savory, sweet, and spicy fermented Korean chili paste) on the table made it complete. Bell's respectable version of Bi Bim Bop was not quite as flavorful as other local Korean mainstays, but a tasty choice nonetheless.

Our taster remarked "I think they've been in business for such a long time for a reason". It feels like you are eating in someone's home, it has a nice vibe, with kitsch on the walls and regular customers who know exactly what they are going to order when they walk through the doors.

It's the perfect local place to take visitors and to see their surprise at this unassuming, homestyle diner that serves the food of the Kwons' two homes

— the U.S. and South Korea — where both are appreciated and celebrated by the community. For a more relaxed pace, you can also stop by for dinner where the same menu is served all day; they're open until 8:30 p.m. ■

Bell's Diner

2167 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor

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Feature

The Network hosts Shahanna McKinney-Baldon residency

By Isaac Pickell

Meeting Wisconsin's Shahanna McKinney-Baldon is not a passive act: you can't simply shake hands, make acquaintance, and generally carry on like you haven't been changed. Over decades of community organizing and activism, she developed a presence that's both patient and sharp, ready to meet you where you're at or take you where she's going.

Over the weekend of January 24–25, McKinney-Baldon made her impact on hundreds in the Greater Ann Arbor Jewish community. Her visit, aptly dubbed a residency with multifaceted and immersive programming, began on Shabbat morning at Beth Israel Congregation. You may remember January 24 as the coldest day of the year, but it was also the coldest January 24 in Ann Arbor history. Despite the weather, or maybe because the cold has a way of bringing people together, more than 150 people from several area congregations filled the Beth Israel sanctuary.

The morning featured three core aspects of the residency: improvisation, facilitation, and song. During her time on the bimah, McKinney-Baldon gave a potent and timely d'var Torah on Parashat Bo, often leaving her notes behind as she wove through prepared remarks titled "Leaving the Narrow Places Together." The speaker also broke into song, performing hazzanut in the styles of Paul Robeson and Yoselle Rosenblatt and leading several rounds of "Down by the Riverside/Lo Yisa Goy" with the congregation.

McKinney-Baldon first explored the place of Jews of Color within the ancient and evolving Jewish-American community.

"The Jewish people have always been diverse, it's in our Torah. We have many many stories about our diversity and one of the really important ones is in this week's portion. When we leave Egypt, we leave as a mixed community, the erev rav, the mixed multitude. We were mixed then and we have remained mixed through all these years. The Jewish community continues to remain diverse through birth, adoption, conversion, intermarriage … I invite you all in as ambassadors for lifting up the diversity in the Jewish community and invite you all in as supporters."

Later, she continued to connect the weekly Torah portion to a togetherness she sees as especially vital in today's world.

"Pharoah says. 'Some of you can go.' Moses says no, we must all go together. We must think of this work around diversity as being about all of us. … None of us will leave Egypt unless all of us leave together. People of Color, whether Jewish or not, face racism in this society. And we have muscle memory about being a diverse community. It's one of our super powers. It's with us from the beginning. So as a Jewish community we get to think about how do we flex our muscle memory to support our diversity and diversity in terms of our neighbors."

McKinney-Baldon's remarks were an invitation to talk about racial justice, a conversation she and many other Jews are already having, "I invite all of you to join a learning community, to talk through what we heard and what comes next." After the kiddush, McKinney-Baldon led a conversation with local Jews of Color to talk about their experiences of and vision for creating and sustaining Jewish spaces that are welcoming to all.

On January 25, McKinney-Baldon presented a talk moderated by University of Michigan Professor of History and Judaic Studies, Bryan K. Roby, that focused on her ongoing research project "Goldye di Shvartze Khaznte: Black Woman Cantor of the Harlem Renaissance Era." Safe from the record cold and itinerant snow, Mckinney-Baldon facilitated a group of 20 to learn, share, and form collaborations, and to consider tactics and strategies for contending with racism in and out of the Jewish community. The residency concluded alongside an intergenerational gathering of community leaders for dinner at The Blue Nile, including undergraduate and graduate students, university faculty, and public organizers.

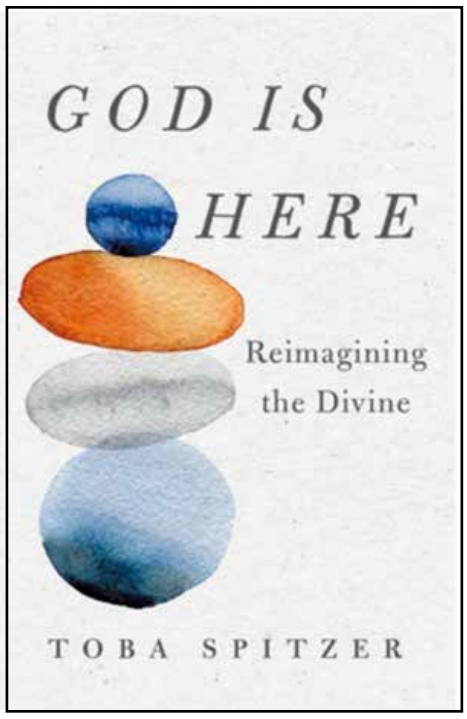
McKinney-Baldon was brought to Ann Arbor by Deborah Greene and The Network | Jewish People of Color of Greater Ann Arbor. Her two-day residency was made possible with the assistance of Beth Israel Congregation, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, and the Community Engagement Fund of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and was co-sponsored by the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Community and Edot Midwest. ■

AARC Book Group reads God is Here

By Emily Eisbruch

The Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) book group got off to a great start in 2026, reading and discussing The World We Knew, by Alice Hoffman, in January, and Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet, by Jamie Ford, in February.

The AARC book group's March 15 meeting is eagerly anticipated as Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador will lead the discussion. The book chosen for March 15 is God Is Here: Reimagining the Divine, by Toba Spitzer. "This book was recommended by our AARC executive director Elizabeth Brindley," explains Rav Gavrielle.



In a 2025 blog for the AARC, Elizabeth wrote:

> "'Mah nora hamakom hazeh! – How awesome is this place!', Jacob exclaims this after realizing he has had a divine encounter while sleeping on the side of the road, using a rock for a pillow. He didn't realize he was roughing it in the house of G-d, but lo! The phrase from the Torah portion, Vayetzei, first popped out at me a few years ago in Toba Spitzer's God is Here: Reimagining the Divine. At the time I was new to working in the prison system, struggling to adjust to the environment, and trying to fill the ample amount of downtime I had as a government employee with some Jewish thought. The context Spitzer used it in, at the time, didn't particularly speak to me, as reading the phrase a dozen times in the Torah portion apparently hadn't, but this time the phrase stuck. What did it mean to really be here, in this place? Is any place holy if you're present with it, or are there other conditions to this awesomeness?

"As I've been reading God is Here, I find myself both personally and professionally intrigued," says Rav Gavrielle. "The 'God-word' can be challenging for so many of us (myself included) — whether because of theology, upbringing, philosophical leanings, or simply the limits of language — and I appreciate the way Spitzer opens things up through metaphor, imagination, and lived experience. I'm excited to see where this will take our conversations."

If you would like to read the book God is Here: Reimagining the Divine and participate in the AARC book group's March 15 discussion, please contact Greg Saltzman at gsaltzman@albion.edu.

AARC Events for March

The AARC is a caring, inclusive, and music-loving community of people who want to practice and study Judaism, or simply be around people who share a commitment to Judaism's values. The AARC's spiritual leader, Rav Gavrielle Pescador, is known for her warmth, her collaborative spirit, and her incredible voice and harp playing. You are invited to visit https://aarecon.org/ or email info@aarecon.org to learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation.

March 14
Second Saturday Morning Shabbat Service. Meditation with Anita Rubin-Meiller 10 a.m. This is a hybrid Shabbat Service led by our Rabbi, Gabrielle Pescador at the JCC and on Zoom. Zoom link will be sent out the week before the event. 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

March 15
Book Club. We will be discussing God Is Here by Toba Spitzer. Rabbi Gabrielle chose this book and will lead the discussion. For more information about the Book Club meeting and the amazing lunch that precedes it, email Greg Saltzman gsaltzman@albion.edu. 1–2 p.m.

March 18
Pop In Torah Study on Zoom. This is an hour led by our Rabbi. 7–8 p.m.

March 19
Rosh Chodesh Nisan Minyan on Zoom. 9 a.m.

March 27
Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat. This is a hybrid service led by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador in
person at the JCC and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Service is followed by a nut-free potluck.
6:30 p.m. ■

Orthodox wellness influencers

Interview with Ayala Fader by Caitlyn Gordon

The University of Michigan Frankel Center for Judaic Studies is pleased to announce that Professor Ayala Fader of Fordham University will deliver the 36th Annual David W. Belin Lecture, titled "Orthodox Jewish Wellness Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics." This free public event will take place in the Pendleton Room of the Michigan Union on Thursday, March 26, 2026, with a pre-lecture reception beginning at 5:30 p.m.. Please RSVP at https://myumi.ch/15PN8 if you are interested in attending.

Fader is a Professor of Anthropology and Jewish Studies at Fordham University. She is the author of the award-winning books Mitzvah Girls (2009) and Hidden Heretics (2020). We caught up with Professor Fader to get a sneak peek into the themes and questions she'll be exploring — and why you won't want to miss this event.

Caitlyn Gordon: Your upcoming Belin Lecture delves into the world of Orthodox Jewish women wellness influencers. What inspired you to choose this topic, and why is it such a timely conversation now?

Ayala Fader: I had just published *Hidden Heretics: Jewish Doubt in the Digital Age*, which examined religious doubt and the internet, when I began research for a new book on Orthodox Jewish responses to infectious disease during the pandemic. In 2022, Orthodox rabbis in New York and New Jersey held a huge rally encouraging women to leave Instagram, which had become a vibrant space for frum women during the pandemic. The rise of frum wellness influencers on Instagram raised all kinds of surprising connections, notably between Orthodox Jewish and conservative Christian women influencers, who shared beliefs around traditional families, bodily sovereignty, and religious freedom. As a longtime ethnographer of Orthodox Jews in New York, I couldn't resist exploring these topics, which were leading to unexpected — and perhaps unintended — religious affinities. Beyond Jewish studies concerns, the wellness industry has become a growing economic, political, and social phenomenon in our increasingly politically polarized world. Religious wellness influencers, especially women, play a huge role in the growing challenges to scientific and religious expertise and authority. We need to pay attention to their impact because it affects us all.

CG: Without spoiling the main discoveries, can you share some intriguing questions or challenges you'll be raising in your lecture?

AF: In the lecture, I'll analyze my discovery of the similarities and differences between Orthodox Jewish influencers and their conservative Christian counterparts. This leads to questions about how frum influencers are inspired by Christian influencers, where they make religious distinctions, what the points of affinity are, and where these break down. More generally, I will show the importance of investigating what I call "interreligious encounters" between Jewish and Christian women. These are the sites where Jewish and Christian women encounter each other, always mediated by social media platforms like Instagram or YouTube. A larger question I'll pose is what Jewish women wellness influencers can tell us about the position of Jewish Orthodoxy in the rise of contemporary illiberal politics in the United States and globally.

CG: For people unfamiliar with frum wellness influencers, why do you think their presence online is something worth exploring, both academically and personally?

AF: Frum wellness influencers are a new phenomenon, challenging many assumptions about dynamics among Jewish Orthodoxy, gender, and social media. Further, my research shows that frum wellness influencers, along with Christian wellness influencers, are contributing a gendered dimension to a political project: to redefine American religion as public, political, racialized, and biblical, including support for Israel. At the same time, frum influencers navigate an uneasy place in this political project because of rising antisemitism and the ambiguity of race among Orthodox Jews. I have studied Orthodox Jews, especially Orthodox women, for over 25 years. Orthodox Jewish women have continued to fascinate me because they defy so many secular expectations for religious femininity. At the same time, sharing space and history with Orthodox Jews continues to provoke my own ethical reflection on what it means to be a Jewish woman and how to write about my research.

CG: For those curious about the impact of social media on religious communities, what new insights or perspectives do you hope your lecture will offer?

AF: Research on religion and media has shown that media, broadly conceived, can support or challenge religious authority. The 2026 Belin lecture will demonstrate that social media creates spaces for interreligious encounters, where Jewish and Christian women share social and political goals. This can unintentionally create dialogue and exchange between religious groups with different histories, who explicitly reject each other's theologies as truth. From the perspective of Jewish studies, this insight points to the importance of studying Jewish Orthodoxy not as bounded, traditional communities, but as a contemporary movement grappling with history and politics today.

CG: Finally, what do you hope people leave thinking about, or maybe even questioning, after attending your lecture?

AF: After my lecture, I hope people will see frum wellness influencers as serious business, reminding us all that politics happen in unexpected places. We should be questioning how Orthodox Jews and conservative Christians are finding affinities, as well as the ethics of how we study these processes. More broadly, I hope to raise questions about religion and the wellness industry. Interreligious encounters show us unexpected positions on health that include vaccine hesitancy, conspiracy theories, and alternative medicine. Frum wellness influencers are an important way that illiberal religion, gender, and media are aligning in new and confounding ways. ■

The Samantha Woll Dialogues
IS AMERICAN ANTISEMITISM EXCEPTIONAL?
March 10, 2026
4pm Rackham Amphitheatre
Part of the Samantha Woll Dialogues, Deborah Dash Moore and Pamela Nadell will discuss the uniqueness of American Antisemitism and its history, as it relates to other minority groups and their experiences in the United States.
Deborah Dash Moore
Jonathan Freedman Distinguished University Professor of History and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
Pamela Nadell
Author, Antisemitism, an American Tradition
Professor and Chair in Women's and Gender History, American University
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יִזְכּוֹר
Ann Arbor Jewish Community
Israeli Memorial Day Commemoration
Sharing Fates
Monday, April 20th, 2026
Ceremony starts at 6:30pm
At Beth Israel Congregation
Please wear white shirts
Song circle to follow the ceremony.
Commemorating Israel's Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism Worldwide

SAVE THE DATE
Yom Ha'Atzmaut
(Independence Day)
ISRAELI BLOCK PARTY
Wednesday, April 22, 5-8pm
at the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor
LIVE MUSIC from Israel with HaShayara Project
TOUR THROUGH ISRAEL
LAWN GAMES
FOOD & DRINK
CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES
THE MOST FUN YOU'LL HAVE IN ISRAEL ...IN ANN ARBOR
A partnership between
Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor
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HEBREW DAY SCHOOL OF ANN ARBOR
JFS

48 hours in Damascus continues from pg. 13

Our group of visitors to Damascus, with representatives from the National Museum of Damascus, outside the museum on September 16, 2025 (David Horovitz / Times of Israel)

"Convey to your American people what you have seen," he urges the group. "Syria is friendly. It is open to anyone. We will use our resources to benefit ourselves and our neighbors."

Syria has many resources, he says, although not all of them, in the northeast, are under the leadership's control. Asked how America can help, he stresses: "We want technology, not commodities."

How sad, I think to myself, that he would not be naturally looking to Israel for that kind of assistance, when he just might have done so before Hamas's invasion and massacre, and the start of our two-year-old ongoing war.

When I ask him how he envisages relations between Israel and Syria, he says he knows there are "some negotiations between us" and that "some things need time to massage."

"Your visit," he says, to smiles in the room, "is one such massage."

All the officials we meet appear dedicated and competent. Professor al-Shaar is an exceptionally well-trained and experienced economist, a former chief of Market Management at Fannie Mae and economic adviser at the World Bank. I resist the impulse to start making comparisons in my head with some of Israel's ministerial representatives. I do wonder, however, how a leadership that was until recently focused on a jihadist ideology, working violently to remove a loathed regime, has so rapidly built a hierarchy capable of identifying officials determined to try to build a better future for their country, who in turn are ready and willing to work with Sharaa, conscious of the urgency of the hour.

As we leave Shaar's office, and people line up to be photographed with him, I ask him if he's okay to be pictured alongside the Israeli journalist in the group. Of course, he says.

And as we head to the elevators, a delegation from the Czech Republic is waiting to meet with him — on the conveyor belt of supporters and potential investors. We all take more photographs together.

Steven Dishler, the assistant vice president of International & Public Affairs at the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, points out quietly to me that Syria suffers from long-term drought and is currently enduring one of the worst such periods. There is so much Israel could do to help in terms of drip irrigation, water reclamation, and other areas of proven Israeli expertise. Maybe it can yet.

You don't have to say yes

Hind Aboud Kabawat, the minister of social affairs and labor, the only Christian and the only woman in the transitional government, says she grew up with Bashar al-Assad — "went to the French school with him" in Damascus — and met him later too.

Of Assad, she says, "You say 'no,' and it's your last day." Of Sharaa: "He listens to us. We don't have to say yes. You can say no, and explain. He wants dialogue."

An accomplished opposition figure, legal counsel, academic, and activist, Kabawat says the new leadership's policy appears to be to put good people in the right jobs.

"I'm treated as an equal. I say what I want. Nobody is giving me orders here. We do day-to-day work" — as in, serious work — including tackling unemployment, which she estimates is at some 60%.

When somebody asks her why she took the job, she, appropriately for our group, quotes Hillel: "If not me, who? If not now, when?"

A limited glimpse, at a fateful moment

We packed in an immense amount, but you don't get to know a country in 48 hours. Least of all, a country at a fateful moment, perched between disintegration and restoration, with a transitional leadership hitherto notorious for Islamic extremism and unproven in nation-building.

We barely left the heart of the capital city, something of a bubble, relatively untouched by the war. One of the Foreign Ministry officials with us had never been to Jobar, a few minutes' drive away, and was deeply affected by the devastation we all saw there.

We were hosted by a government intent on showing a welcoming face to the developed world, seeking stability and projecting a strategic desire to maintain it. Ahmed al-Sharaa won over U.S. President Donald Trump within minutes at their meeting in Saudi Arabia in May. "Young, attractive guy. Tough guy. Strong past. Very strong past. Fighter. He's got a real shot at holding it together," said Trump, immediately lifting sanctions on Syria and encouraging Sharaa to join the Abraham Accords when the time is ripe.

The Syrian president is taking a large delegation to the UN General Assembly next week. He and his astutely chosen ministers and officials will likely make many more friends on that trip — in huge contrast to the near-universally isolated and denigrated Israel.

The officials we met know this is a make-or-break period for Syria, that they don't have much time to heal a broken nation. Strategic success will not come quickly; failure would be immediate.

I'd had no idea what I'd encounter in Damascus — whether, despite printed assurances, they'd let me in; whether my making explicit in our meetings that I am the editor of The Times of Israel, a journalist from Jerusalem, would cause dismay or worse.

I also did not know what it would be like to walk around Damascus in the company of rabbis and scholars, clearly Jewish and not particularly fast on our feet.

Anything can happen at any time, of course, but in our 48 hours, nothing adverse did.

Lopatin in his kippa, Chitrik with his hat, Schiffman with his flowing beard were met with warmth and respect in every encounter I witnessed — from official events to strolling in the main souk alongside the working people of Damascus.

As Chitrik and I walked back toward the hotel through an alley on Tuesday evening, a middle-aged man pulled up alongside us on his small motorbike and motioned to Chitrik. He wanted a selfie.

Chitrik obliged, and he smiled and was on his way. You could not have choreographed a more emblematic moment.■

Spotlight on community security

By Jewish Federation Staff

It is an unfortunate reality that greater and greater attention must be paid and resources utilized in making the Jewish community more safe and secure. Of course, targeted attacks on religious institutions, schools, and civic organizations are not limited to the Jewish community, but hate crime statistics demonstrate that Jewish communal institutions and individuals are at greater risk. And, work done by the Jewish community to address communal safety has resulted in more expertise and resources being shared with other faith and nonprofit institutions.

"The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor takes seriously its obligation to do everything possible to help protect the people and institutions that comprise the local community while maintaining welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant Jewish programs and spaces," says Jewish Federation CEO Eileen Freed. "Unfortunately, this has become more and more costly — local Jewish communal institutions are spending a combined $600,000/year in security guard funding alone."

"Security has become an increasingly important and ongoing need," says Shannon Hall, Executive Director of Temple Beth Emeth. "Each year, the number of hours we employ professional security personnel continues to grow in response to heightened awareness and evolving concerns."

Freed explains that the Jewish Federation has set an ambitious Annual Community Campaign goal of $2 million for 2026, which includes $275,000 to support the community's LiveSecure program and offset up to 30% of the cost of security guard services for local Jewish communal organizations.

In June 2023, the Jewish Federation commenced participation in LiveSecure, an initiative of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and Secure Communities Network (SCN) to improve and expand the safety and security of Jewish communities across North America. The initiative, chaired by former JFNA Board Chair Julie Platt and funded by major philanthropists, provided the local Jewish Federation with a one-to-one matching grant of $91,000 per year for three years to develop a local security program.

To accomplish its aims, the Jewish Federation entered a partnership with Jewish Community Security, Inc. (JCSI) of Metro Detroit to hire the local community's first Jewish Community Security Director, Shane Dennis. Over the past two and a half years, Shane has established a system of coordination and communication among local Jewish organizations for security issues, special events, and training needs; assisted agencies with developing individualized emergency procedures; and served as a liaison to local, state, and federal law enforcement partners.

Just four months into his role, the events following October 7 demonstrated just how important the Community Security leadership position is. Shane addressed security incidents and coordinated security coverage for events, marches, rallies, and facilities on campus and the local Jewish community. During this time, his already strong relationships with local law enforcement were strengthened as he worked with them to protect the people participating in these important events.

He also provided training for local staff and volunteers at synagogues, Hebrew Day School, and the Jewish Community Center. Training has included both situational awareness, incident response, and "The Power of Hello" to foster a welcoming environment while assessing potential threats.

Under Shane's leadership the Jewish Federation has invested over $131,000 in training, building security projects, and security guard support for local Jewish organizations. These funds supported necessary projects that could not wait for the long Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) process, such as external access door upgrades and a new alarm system at the JCC and new, more secure doors at Chabad House.

"The Federation doesn't just help keep our doors secure," says Hebrew Day School Head of School Will Keller. "They give our educators the confidence to focus fully on students, knowing the community has their backs. In supporting our security, the Federation safeguards not only our buildings, but the learning, joy, and Jewish future that unfold inside them every single day."

LiveSecure and Shane's expertise, advice, and input have brought outside funds for security into the community. Shane assisted local organizations in successfully submitting Federal nonprofit security grants totaling just under $560,000. An additional $400,000 in submissions await final determinations.

Because of Jewish Federation's participation in LiveSecure, they were able to secure $174,000 over the past two years from the Tepper Foundation to offset the cost of security guards for programs for children 0–5 years of ages. These funds were used to provide security services for Camp Raanana and Camp Gan Israel, the JCC's Early Childhood Center and Hebrew Day School, and High Holiday and Shabbat services at local congregations.

"Having a consistent security presence throughout the year — at our Shabbat morning services, Sunday Hebrew school, holiday programs, and Camp Gan Israel — has brought a real sense of calm and reassurance to our congregants and families," says Rabbi Alter Goldstein of Ann Arbor Chabad. "Support from the LiveSecure and Tepper Grant funds has allowed our community to focus on prayer, learning, and connection, knowing that thoughtful and professional measures are in place."

Additional LiveSecure program accomplishments include the establishment of an online incident reporting form, development of a crisis communications plan, security assessments for all local facilities, and providing a Holocaust education program developed specifically for law enforcement to local law enforcement personnel and county prosecutors.

"The financial support from LiveSecure and Tepper Grant provided much needed funding to continue to improve our overall security footprint," says David Stone, Executive Director of the JCC. "We are grateful for these funds and acknowledge how important this support is for all who participate in activities at the JCC."

"It is clear we cannot turn back the clock on community security," says Freed. "We must come together as a community to sustain this program while ensuring that our community partners have the resources they need to focus on joyful, meaningful, and transformative Jewish engagement." She encourages community members to support community security efforts by making a gift or pledge to the 2026 Annual Community Campaign at Jewishannarbor.org.

For more information about LiveSecure and how to help, contact Shane Dennis (shane@jewishannarbor.org) or Eileen Freed (eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org). To report an incident or support LiveSecure, visit www.jewishannarbor.org/our-community/community-security/.■

Rabbis Corner

"Half-shekel" coin of fire

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

The Torah portion for March 7, Ki Tisa, contains the commandment to give the half-shekel: "This shall they give ... a half-shekel ... an offering to G-d." On this verse the Jerusalem Talmud comments: "The Holy One, Blessed Be He, removed a coin of fire from under the Throne of Glory and showed it to Moses, saying, 'This shall they give.'"

Moses had no difficulty understanding what was meant by a half-shekel; what he did not understand was how this offering could atone for the souls of the Jewish people. When G-d showed him the coin of fire, the concept was explained.

What lesson does the "coin of fire" contain for us in our own service of G-d?

A coin has the same fixed value for everyone. By contrast, different objects are worth more or less to different individuals. To one person the value of a particular object will be great, and he will be willing to pay a large sum of money to possess it. Another person, who does not desire it as much, will consider it to be of lesser value. But a coin is not open to disagreement. Its value is always the same.

A coin, matbei'a in Hebrew, comes from the root meaning nature, teva. It is symbolic of kabalat ol (the acceptance of the yoke of heaven), which is the same for everyone, independent of emotions or intellectual capacities. True, people differ greatly from one another, but the basic acceptance of the concept that G-d's will must be fulfilled is the same for all, just like a coin whose value is fixed and never changes.

Fire is characterized by a perpetual upward movement. The nature of flame is to rise up; it yearns to ascend ever higher. Not only does fire never move downward, it never stays still.

Fire is symbolic of movement and activity, of yearning and progression. A Jew's G-dly service is likened to fire, for he is always striving to ascend higher and draw closer to G-d. However, each person's spiritual service is dependent on his individual ability. The level of his service is determined by his particular powers of comprehension and emotional capacities. In this respect, all people are different. Each "fire" is different, unlike the coin whose value is always the same.

The half-shekel, the "coin of fire," represents a unification of these two concepts.

Human nature is such that when a person acts according to the dictates of his own emotions he is filled with vitality and enthusiasm — fire. When he acts out of a sense of obligation, this excitement is absent. His actions are deliberate and calculated, but they are not enthusiastic.

The Jew's service is to combine the "coin" with the "fire," to accept the yoke of heaven with fervor and enthusiasm. Such service has the power to atone for sin..■

March Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here.

Sunday 1
Israeli Purim Party. JCC. 11 a.m.

Monday 2

Tuesday 3 Purim
Purim in the Shuk. Chabad at the JCC. 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday 4
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested in Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. For more information email Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@umich.edu at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2 p.m.

Thursday 5

Friday 6
Candle Lighting 6:13 p.m.

Saturday 7 Ki Tisa
Havdallah 7:14 p.m.
The Firefly: Live Stories of Camp Tavor. 7 p.m.

Sunday 8 Daylight Saving Spring Forward
Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel: A conversation with Aviva Klompas. 7 p.m.

Monday 9
EMU CJS: Mike Rothschild "Space Lasers and Conspiracies." Rescheduled from an earlier date. 7 p.m.

Tuesday 10
Is American Antisemitism Exceptional? Samantha Woll Dialogue Series. Deborah Dash Moore and Pamela Nadell. 4 p.m.

Wednesday 11
Yiddish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 12
Night of Comedy and FUNdraising, benefiting PJ Library, at the Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase. 6 p.m.

Friday 13
Candle Lighting 7:21 p.m.
Michigan Hillel Centennial Celebration. Various events thru Monday.

Saturday 14 HaChodesh
Havdallah 8:22 p.m.

Sunday 15

Monday 16

Tuesday 17
Hasidic Women in the Media. Jessica Roda (Georgetown University) & Malchy Goldman. Frankel Center. 5 p.m.

Wednesday 18
Yiddish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 19 Rosh Chodesh Nissan

Friday 20
Candlelight 7:29 p.m.

Saturday 21 Vayikra
Havdallah 8:30 p.m.

Sunday 22
Jewish Storytime at the AADL. Downtown Branch. Register on JLive. 10:30 a.m.

Monday 23

Tuesday 24
How Ford Transformed Religion in America. Frankel Center. 5 p.m.

Wednesday 25
Yiddish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 26
JCC's Book Series Lunch & Learn: *Songs for the Brokenhearted* by Ayelet Tsabari. 12 noon.

"**Orthodox Jewish Wellness Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics**." The University of Michigan Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Professor Ayala Fader of Fordham University will deliver the 36th Annual David W. Belin Lecture. This free public event will take place in the Pendleton Room of the Michigan Union. 5:30 p.m.

Friday 27
Candlelight 7:37 p.m.

Saturday 28 Tzav
Havdallah 8:38 p.m.

Sunday 29
4th Annual Recovery Seder. 4 p.m.

Monday 30

Tuesday 31
Reception to honor Andrew Grahn, The Milkman, and the travelling exhibit. JCC. 5:30 p.m..■

The milkman of Berrien County

By Chuck Newman

The milkman and his daughter.

If it wasn't for the milkman we would have starved to death."

That's what my mother and her siblings would tell me whenever I asked about their childhood. Ever since I heard this story I wanted to know more about this compassionate man and wished I could somehow thank him. This is the story of my quest to identify and honor the memory of "the milkman."

My mother, Dorothy Katz Newman, and her siblings grew up in poverty in rural Michigan. My mother wanted me to realize what their life was like when she shared this story: once her brother found a quarter that he gave to their mother who was then able to go to the butcher for a soupbone so she could make soup. Her mother, Jennie Katz, had a huge garden at their home in Paw Paw Lake that was the source of the fruits and vegetables that she would can and preserve so her family would have something to eat. She also obtained dairy products for her children from the milkman who said, "pay me when you can," which turned out to be 6 years and $600 later. At the time, $600 was a lot of money from someone who had to provide for his own family.

Sophie, Dorothy, Jennie and Sydney Katz

A couple of years ago I was reading an article in Michigan History magazine about a house in Paw Paw Lake that was in the same family for over 100 years and was built by a Swedish immigrant, Andrew Grahn, who was a milkman. Was he "the milkman?" With some help from the internet, I was able to find the phone number of the current resident of the house, the milkman's granddaughter, who was as gracious as her grandfather was kind. That phone call led to many more and a visit to the milkman's farm.

From his granddaughter I learned that Andrew Grahn was a hardworking immigrant from Sweden who built his house himself and established a small dairy. He was incredibly generous and provided dairy products on credit to his needy customers who he knew would never be able to repay him. Also, during the depression, the schools didn't have the money to pay the teachers' salaries. Without telling his wife, he went to the bank, mortgaged his farm and gave the money to the schools so the children could get an education.

To honor Andrew Grahn I commissioned my sister's husband, John Moga, to research and create an exhibit of his life. Last October a reception was held at the North Berrian Historical Museum in Coloma, where descendants of Andrew Grahn and Jennie Katz spoke and met one another. My sister provided baked goods she prepared using Jennie's baking pans. It was an emotional experience for all who attended and one of the most meaningful and gratifying experiences of my life.

There will be another reception to honor Andrew Grahn's memory on March 31 when the traveling exhibit of his life will be on display at the Ann Arbor Jewish Community Center, 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Family members will be available to answer questions.

As a result of Andrew Grahn's generosity, Jennie Katz's children were able to stay together as a family, which eventually led to fulfilling lives and the ability to give back to the country that gave them and Andrew Grahn the opportunity to achieve the American dream. Both of Jennie's sons served with distinction in WWII. One earned medals for bravery when he fought in Europe and the other helped build the atomic bomb. Both of her daughters were beloved teachers.

Some WJN readers may have known my mother when she cooked for "her seniors" at the JCC using the skills acquired helping her mother cook from the time she was 11. She was in her 70s and 80s then, which made her older than many of "her seniors."

Andrew Grahn's story of an immigrant from Sweden giving a helping hand to a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe is a best of America story and it needed to be told. I feel lucky to have a role in its telling..■

An immigrant's message from 1955

By Ruth Petit

What American Citizenship Means to Me

9-12-55

(Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of letters on "What American Citizenship Means To Me" written by local residents who became naturalized Americans in ceremonies here at some time during the past 20 years. This Citizenship Week series will continue through Saturday).

* * *

By SIGMUND CAHN
Retired Factory Worker

Becoming an American citizen means freedom for me.

We really believe America is the land of opportunity.

We came to America from Westerburg, Germany, Sept. 2, 1938, with our daughter.

We were with Hitler five years but we could not stay with him. The Hitler government made new

MR. and MRS. CAHN

laws against the Jewish people, and life was miserable.

We had established a department store business. It had been in our families for 60 years but we were forced to give up our business. Therefore we decided to leave Germany. When we set our feet on American soil we were very happy to take a free breath and talk freely again.

Our daughter attended the lower grades of the public school and then graduated from Muskegon High School in 1943. Schools are different in this country. Here everyone can receive a free education if they wish. We attended the Americanization classes where we were educated to become American citizens. I became naturalized in May, 1944, and Mrs. Cahn in May, 1945. My date of birth is June 18, 1885.

I have been employed in the American Store Equipment factory but was forced to retire because of ill health.

We like to live in Muskegon because the people are so very friendly. We have made so many friends. We wish we had come earlier to live in this beautiful country where we all have the same rights.

Therefore we must work to keep it free and to preserve government of the people, by the people and for the people.

We must do what we can to help our beloved country—America.

This is a newspaper article from the *Muskegon Chronicle* newspaper, written in September 1955, by my grandfather. My grandparents, Sigmund and Selma Cahn, and my 14-year-old mother emigrated to the United States in 1938. I had never seen this article until recently, but I love to read in my grandfather's own words about what it meant to him to be free here in America. They were lucky enough to leave Germany when they did and were very grateful to be here in the U.S. I never really knew my grandfather — he died when I was very young — but my grandmother and mother never really talked much about Germany, as it was with many people. I especially enjoy how my grandfather closed his newspaper article with "we must do what we can to help our beloved country — America."

.■

March events at Beth Israel

Purim at Beth Israel Congregation
Sunday, March 1, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. — Purim Carnival
Monday, March 2, at 6 p.m. — Megillah Reading and Purim Spiel
Families: Join us on March 1 from 11:30–12:30 for our Purim Carnival. Games, prizes, costume contest, mini megillah reading, and hamantaschen. Join us on March 2 at 6 p.m. for the megillah reading and Purim Spiel, written and directed by Tom Segal. Dessert reception to follow.

Youth Service Experience with Rabbi Bair
Saturdays March 7, 14, 21 and 28, at 11 a.m.
Youth Service Experience with Rabbi Bair now meets weekly at 11 a.m. Shabbat mornings. It is an interactive prayer service with a parsha play. (2nd grade and up. Younger kids are welcome with parent accompaniment). Meets in the M & M Chapel; ends with youth leading Adon Olam in the sanctuary.

Tot Shabbat
Saturdays, March 7 and 21, at 11 a.m.
Join us for a playful morning of Jewish songs and stories. Challah and grape juice kiddush included. For kids age 1 through 1st grade and parents, but all are welcome to join.

Passover Friendly Desserts with Amanda Fisher
Wednesday, March 11, at 4:30 p.m.
Enjoy an early start to celebrating Passover by joining us as we learn how to make some delicious Passover-friendly desserts with Amanda Fisher. You'll get to take some home to enjoy! Please register through the website on our calendar.

Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat
Friday, March 13, at 5 p.m.
A Jewish Renewal-inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. The choir, dubbed the "Holy Levites," will be holding a rehearsal at 5:30 p.m. leading right up to and seamlessly into services. All are welcome to attend.

Shabbat 101
Sunday, March 15, at 10:30 a.m.
Starting and ending Shabbat with the traditional blessings truly invites a sense of holiness, togetherness, gratitude, and shalom bayit. No knowledge of Hebrew or prayers necessary. Learn the "how-to" of making Shabbat at home on Friday night with Rav Nadav. Learn how to make the Shabbat Blessings and Kiddush at the Shabbat table and practice it together.

Beth Israel Trivia Night with Your Host, Jason Schmier
Sunday, March 15, at 4 p.m.
Jason will lead us in a fun evening of trivia while we enjoy wine and cheese. There is a $10 charge to participate. Form your own team of 3–6 people or join a team when you arrive. There will be prizes for the winning team! Register on the BIC website.

Chavurat Nashim, In the Company of Women Abridged Seder with Rabbi Aura Ahuvia
Wednesday, March 18, at 4:30 p.m.
In our individualistic society, we can forget the importance of the group. Connecting is crucial — crucial to our mental health, to our societal well-being, and to our collective freedom. Why does it feel like we're building more boundaries than bridges? How do we restore us to each other? Come explore the theme of connecting and how it relates to freedom. Paired with seder highlights (as opposed to a complete "mini-seder"), we'll sing, learn, study, and most importantly connect with each other. Catch the spark of meaningful conversation and see where it takes you! An uplifting evening of music and song, meaningful conversation, learning, and laughter! Please be sure to register through our calendar.

Mad for Plaid Shabbat
Saturday, March 21, at 9:30 a.m.
Join us for services wearing your favorite plaid shirt in honor of Mad for Plaid month.

Red Cross Blood Drive
Sunday, March 22, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
Every Drop Counts: be a lifesaver today! Join us in making a difference in the world. Your act of kindness could be the reason someone gets a second chance at life. Sign up at www.redcrossblood.org and enter code bic13.

ISRAEL360 Presents David de Jong and Gilad Halpern — Journalistic impressions: Covering Israel and the Middle East to the World
Sunday, March 22, at 7 p.m.
David de Jong is a journalist and author who is currently a Knight-Wallace Fellow at the University of Michigan. He most recently worked from Tel Aviv as a Middle East correspondent for Het Financieele Dagblad, the

Netherland's premier business newspaper. His stories are known for holding the rich and powerful accountable. Gilad Halpern is a journalist and media historian. He has recently completed a PhD at the University of Haifa's Department of Communication, entitled "The Palestine Post 1932–1950: Journalism and Advocacy amid Imperial Decline and Rising Nationalism." Prior to becoming an academic he was a full-time journalist in Israel and Europe. Please register on the BIC website.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin via Zoom
Mondays at 4 p.m.
The class meets on Zoom on Monday afternoons from 4–5:15. We will read the text in the original Hebrew or Aramaic with an accompanying English translation and discuss the text in English. No familiarity with Hebrew or prior experience studying Talmud is required. This fall and winter, we will be studying from the third chapter of the tractate of Bava Metzia which addresses issues of the obligations and responsibilities of people who are taking care of objects or animals belonging to another person. All are welcome!

Theology Book Club — Online
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation's Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events. Services are being held in person and virtually, unless otherwise noted on the calendar. Below is a list of the links to participate virtually in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links are also available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Minyan
Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the M&M Chapel and online
Sundays–Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 5 p.m. on March 6
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m. starting on March 13 (March 20 at special time of 5:30 p.m.)

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual
Saturdays at 9:30 a.m..■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Paul Unangst, on the death of his wife, Fredda Unangst, Wednesday, January 21, 2026.
Murray Baruch on the death of his father, Leonard Baruch.
Wendy Uhlmann on the death of her stepfather, Craig Mathews.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:

Jake and Leah Becker on the birth of their son, Beni Joe.
Lori Bennett and Steve Stein on the birth of their granddaughter, Etta Rose, daughter of Libby Ashton and Bennett Stein and sister of Cyvia.
Elena Luchina and Matthew Zeltzer on their marriage.

Obituaries

The WJN prints obituaries, memories, and eulogies free of charge for family members of Washtenaw Jewish community members as a service to the community and to honor the lives of those who have passed away. When local congregations send condolence notices to the WJN, the editor searches for obituaries online. Also, community members are invited to send obituaries to the editor.

Judith Belle Levine Greenbaum, PhD, an educator and pioneering advocate for children with special needs, and a beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away peacefully on June 14, 2025, at the age of 93.

Born on November 21, 1931, Judith grew up in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan and was a proud alumna of The High School of Music and Art. Her love of music continued throughout her life, including being a member of the University of Michigan's Gamelan Ensemble, which she joined in the early 1970s when it was one of the very first such ensembles in the country.

In 1952, she married Leonard Greenbaum, starting a partnership grounded in love, intellect, and a deep commitment to social justice. Their lives were profoundly shaped by the birth in 1963 of their daughter Susannah, who was born with a developmental disability. Institutionalization was recommended for Susannah, but instead Judith and Leonard dedicated themselves to advancing the rights and dignity of children and all individuals with disabilities, a mission that became the foundation of Judith's life's work.

As examples, Judith and Leonard, alongside others in the nascent disability rights community, were instrumental in promulgating Michigan's School Reform Act of 1976. This law for the first time mandated that public schools educate all children, including those with disabilities, who until then could be denied access to an education. They also helped found the Association for Children with Social and Learning Disabilities, which created physical and emotional spaces for families and educators to collaborate, educate, and find hope.

After Leonard's untimely death at the age of 42, Judith somehow balanced the tasks of raising her four children and continuing her education and advocacy work. Having received her BA from the University of Michigan in 1952, she returned to U of M and earned her PhD in Education in 1980. Thereafter she devoted herself to advancing the field of special education, as an advocate for children and their parents, and as an educator.

She worked closely with Head Start and numerous school systems, including Ann Arbor's, ensuring that children with developmental and learning differences received the support and respect they deserved. Her advocacy for educational and social opportunity often put her at odds with school systems and other bureaucracies, but this was a role she took on with gusto, and by doing so helped countless families and individuals.

Judith wrote many books about advocacy, disability, and education. Among her books, *Finding Your Focus* and *Life Planning for Adults with Developmental Disabilities* both remain vital resources for parents, educators, and professionals navigating the challenges of support and inclusion for those with developmental disabilities.

In the 1980s Judith joined up with a new partner, Dan Roberts, and welcomed into the family his children Lisa, Chrisy, and Rachel, and their respective families.

Judith is survived by her loving children, Daniel (Alice), Joshua, and Sara (the late Darryl Sherman), seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

She was the matriarch of her large extended family and is mourned by her brother Michael and his children, and by loving cousins from both her mother's and father's families. She was predeceased by Leonard in 1973. Dan Roberts passed away in the fall of 2024. Her daughter Susannah passed away on July 3, shortly after Judith's death.

Judith's intellect, determination, and compassion inspire us all. She left the world a much better place than she found it — for her family, for her students, and for people with disabilities and their families.

A private family service will be held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to organizations supporting special education and disability rights.

Susannah Ariel Greenbaum, beloved daughter, sister, aunt, niece, and friend, passed away peacefully on July 3, 2025. Born December 23, 1963, Susie enriched the lives of everyone who knew her with her enthusiasm and kindness, and by being herself.

When Susie was born she was declared to be, in the nomenclature of the time, "mentally retarded" and only "trainable," not "educable." Institutionalization was recommended, but her parents Judith and Leonard rejected this and set out to make her a member of society, and to make society accept her rather than hide her away. To this end, her parents became active advocates for the rights of persons with intellectual and social disabilities. Through their fierce efforts, important strides were made to secure access to public education for people with disabilities, and Susie was eventually mainstreamed in public schools. Her parents helped found the Association for Children with Social and Learning Difficulties to support other families. Leonard served on the Ann Arbor Mayor's Committee for Disability Rights, helping to advance inclusion across the community. Judith earned her PhD in Special Education and was a tireless advocate for families navigating the special education process at public schools throughout Michigan. Susie thrived because her parents rejected the labels given her at birth.

Susie was a funny and enthusiastic person with a good sense of humor and an active BS meter. Despite her limited language and intellectual skills, she nonetheless had a keen social intelligence, and pulled pranks, made jokes, and gave pithy opinions about those she loved and those she thought needed improvement. Susie was generous and helpful in everyday ways: she would set the table for dinner, help with grocery shopping, and was always ready to assist with cooking and baking. Susie loved spending time with her caregivers Penny and Pat, going out for lunch, having sleepovers, and hanging out. Most of all, Susie so enjoyed being with her family — laughing, playing games, eating, and just being together — and her delight we fondly remember and deeply miss.

Educated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Providence in Northville, Michigan, Susie later flourished in community life in the Ann Arbor area. She loved music — especially Elvis Presley — and looked forward to weekends at The Fowler Center, a respite camp for people with disabilities. Susie was a regular at Friendship Fellowship Circle at a local Ann Arbor church and found joy and purpose in her job with Community Mental Health, where she helped sort donated clothing and assisted in cleaning churches. She loved being active: participating in Special Olympics (a program her mother and stepfather helped bring to her residence), going on field trips to local sports games, bowling with friends, and playing Uno on game nights.

She was predeceased by her parents Dr. Leonard and Dr. Judith Greenbaum, and by her stepfather Daniel Roberts. She is survived by her brothers Daniel (Alice) and Joshua, and sister Sara; stepsisters Lisa, Chrissy, and Rachel Roberts; seven nieces and nephews, one great-niece; and her devoted caregivers, Penny and the late Pat Dombrowski, who loved and cared for Susie like family.

Susie's life — gentle, joyful, and full of small, meaningful acts — made her a beloved member of her family and community. A celebration of Susie's life will be announced by the family. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions to local disability-support organizations such as The Fowler Center or Arbor Hospice, who actively supported Susie in her final days..■

TBE Events in March

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
Join the Clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested.

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested.

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception
Fridays at 6 p.m. (except for the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service
Fridays at 6:30 p.m. (Every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekday morning blessings
Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.
Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Queer Torah Study
Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Join us on Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte, Zelda Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Zelda (zeldamaybiz@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Weekly Mahj
Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open
Friday at 5:30 p.m. (Every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)
Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

TBE Purim Carnival
Sunday, March 1, at 3:30 p.m.

Jewish Book Club
Thursdays, March 5, 12, 19, and 26, at 11 a.m.

Liberal Zionism: Between Crisis and Aspiration Class
Thursday, March 5 and 12, at 7 p.m.
Fridays, March 6 and 13, at 12 p.m.

Renaissance Group Square Dance
Saturday, March 7, at 7 p.m.

Jewish Monsters & Magic II
Sunday, March 8, at 4 p.m.

Leviticus Through a Gendered Lens
Mondays, March 9, 16, 23, and 30, at 12 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Monday, March 9, at 7 p.m.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Wednesday, March 11, at 1 p.m.

Active Assailant Training with Ann Arbor Police
Wednesday, March 11. at 7 p.m.

Safety & Security Building Tour of TBE Spaces
Friday, March 13, at 5 p.m.

Refugee and Immigrant & Choir Shabbat Service
Friday, March 13, at 7:30 p.m.

Bereavement Group
Tuesday, March 17, at 4 p.m.

Monthly Rosh Chodesh Circle
Wednesday, March 18, at 11 a.m.

Brotherhood Guys Night Out
Wednesday, March 19, at 6 p.m.

WTBE Passover Sale
Friday, March 20, at 11 a.m.
Sunday, March 22, at 3 p.m.
Friday, March 27, at 11 a.m.

LGBTQ Shabbat Potluck
Friday, March 20, at 5:30 p.m.

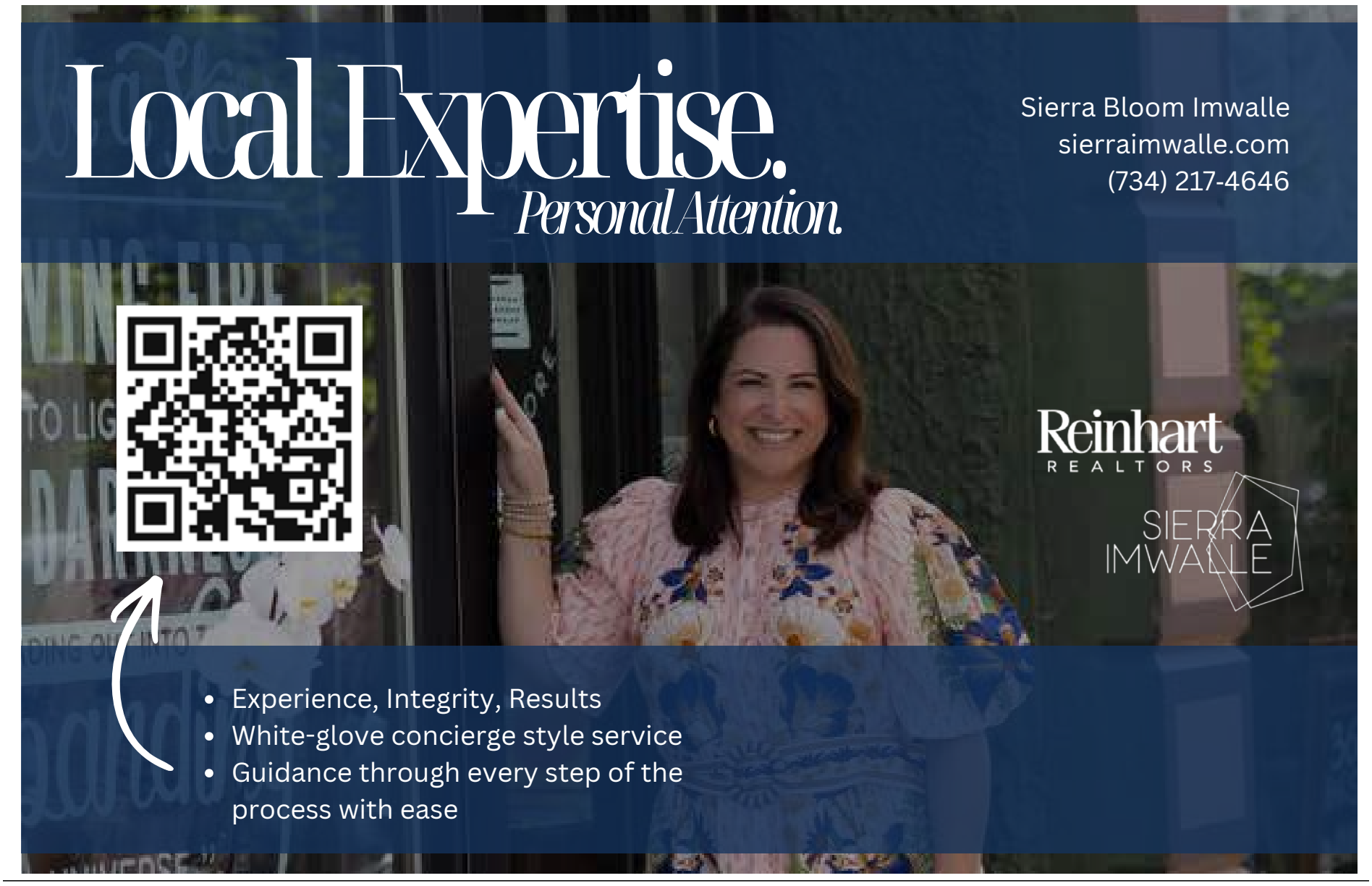
Caregiver Appreciation Dinner and Havdalah
Saturday, March 21, at 6 p.m.

Teen Board Game Night
Monday, March 23, at 5:30 p.m.

Brotherhood Guys Day Out
Tuesday, March 24, at 9:30 a.m.

Recovery Seder
Sunday, March 29, at 4 p.m. The Recovery Passover Seder is back with the 4th annual seder taking place at Dawn Farm. All are welcome whether you are in recovery, a family member, an ally, or even just curious! Passover is our celebration of freedom from slavery and pairs well with freedom from addiction. The Recovery Seder recognizes the challenges of the symbols of Passover and helps create a safe space to celebrate. Registration is required and donations are gratefully accepted although not required.

Brotherhood Men's Seder
Monday, March 30, at 6 p.m...■



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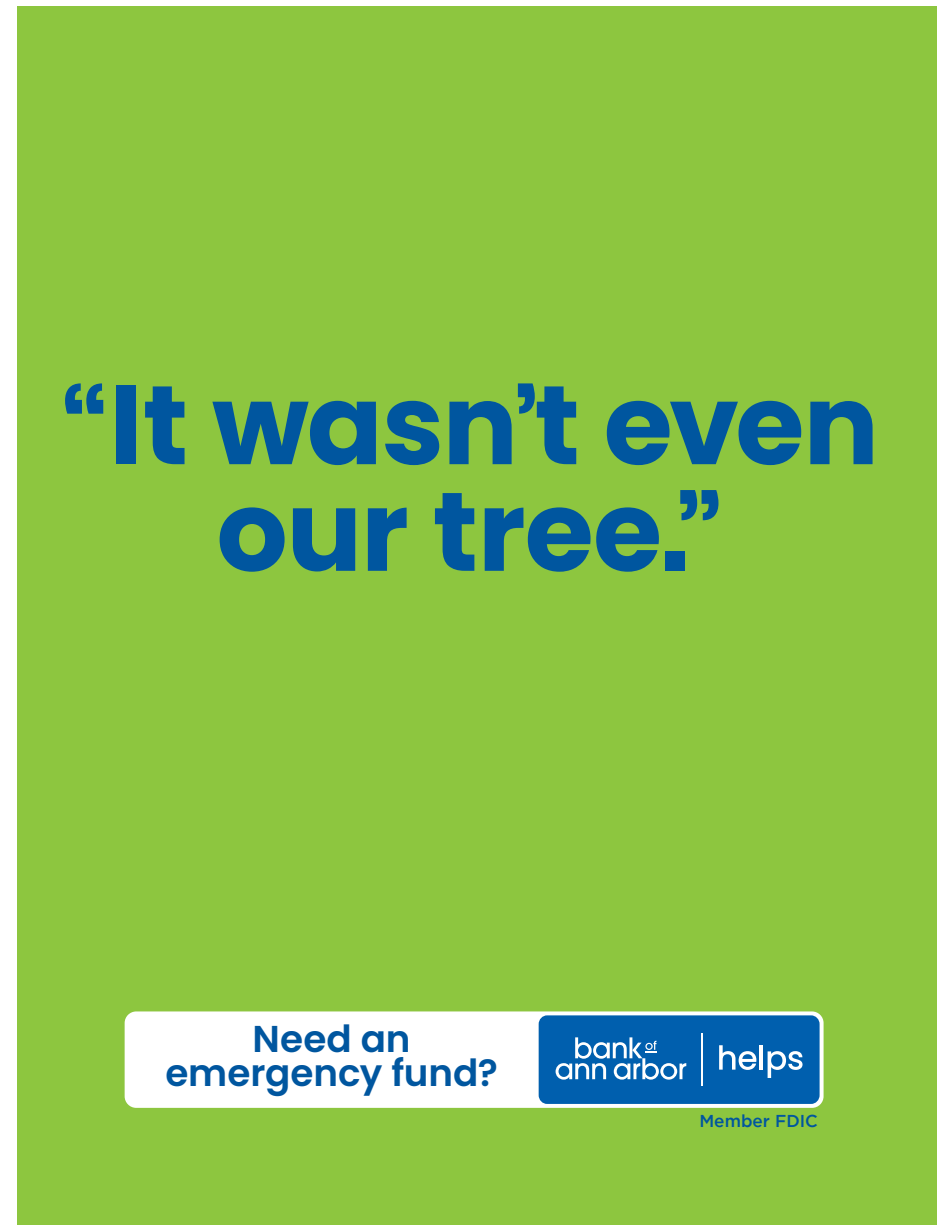
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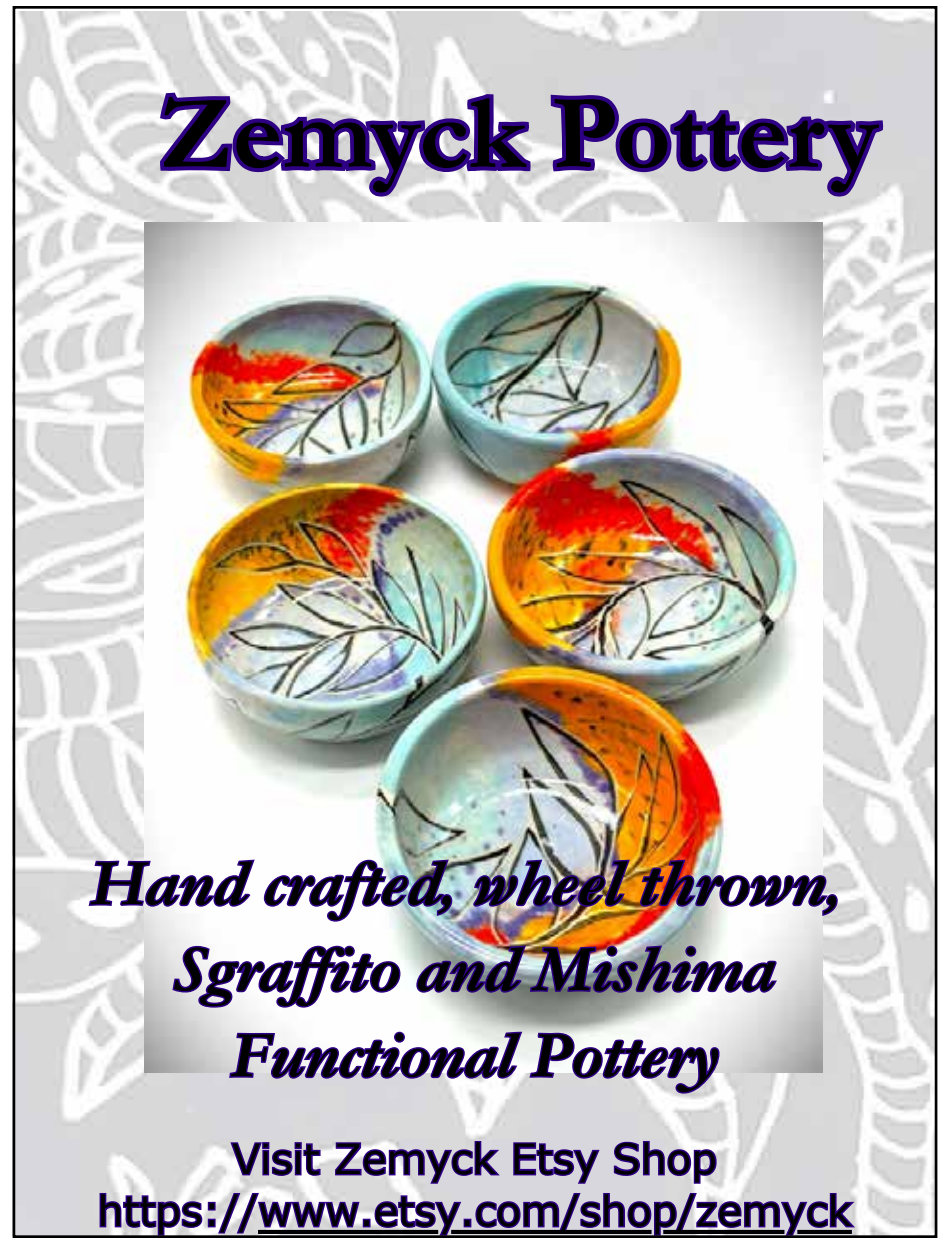
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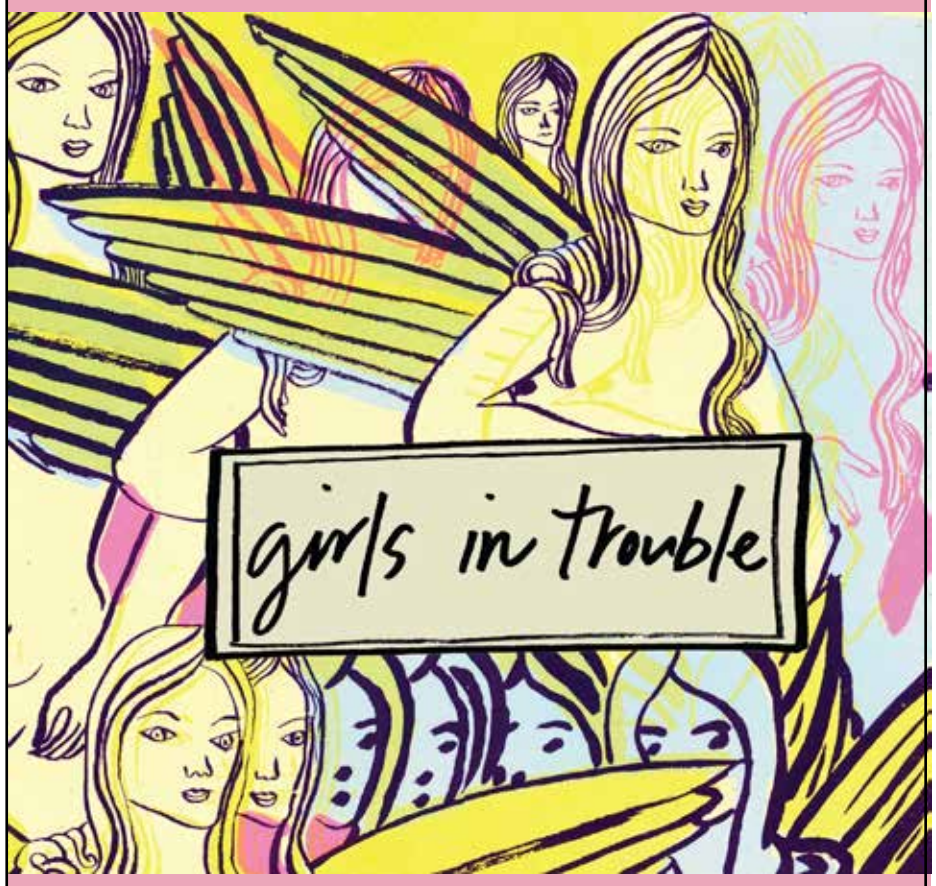


BRINGING BIBLICAL WOMEN TO LIFE THROUGH SONG AND STORYTELLING

SUNDAY APRIL 12, 2026
6:00 PM

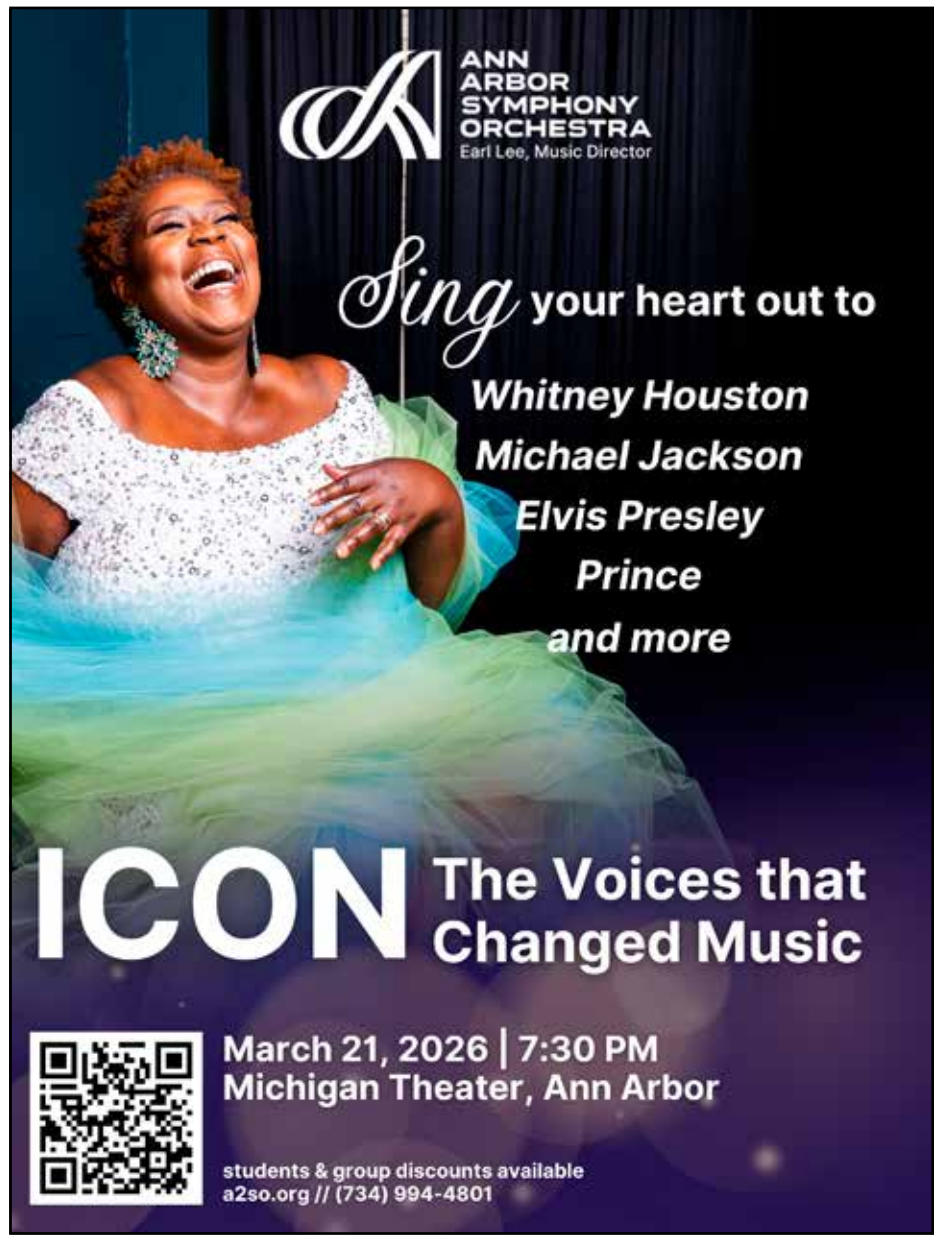
FREE COFFEE

SCAN ME

THE COMMON CUP
1511 WASHTENAW AVE
ANN ARBOR, MI 48104

RSVP: HTTPS://MYUMI.CH/E8RQ2

JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

4th Annual Martin B. Shichtman Lecture

MIKE ROTHSCHILD:

"JEWISH SPACE LASERS: THE ROTHSCHILDS AND 200 YEARS OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES"

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026
7:00 PM, STUDENT CENTER, 310A

Mike Rothschild is a journalist, expert in the growth and impact of conspiracy theories and disinformation, and author, featured by The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New Yorker, the BBC, NPR, Rolling Stone, the Guardian, and more, appearing on CNN, MSNBC, and PBS Newshour, and other major podcasts and radio shows.